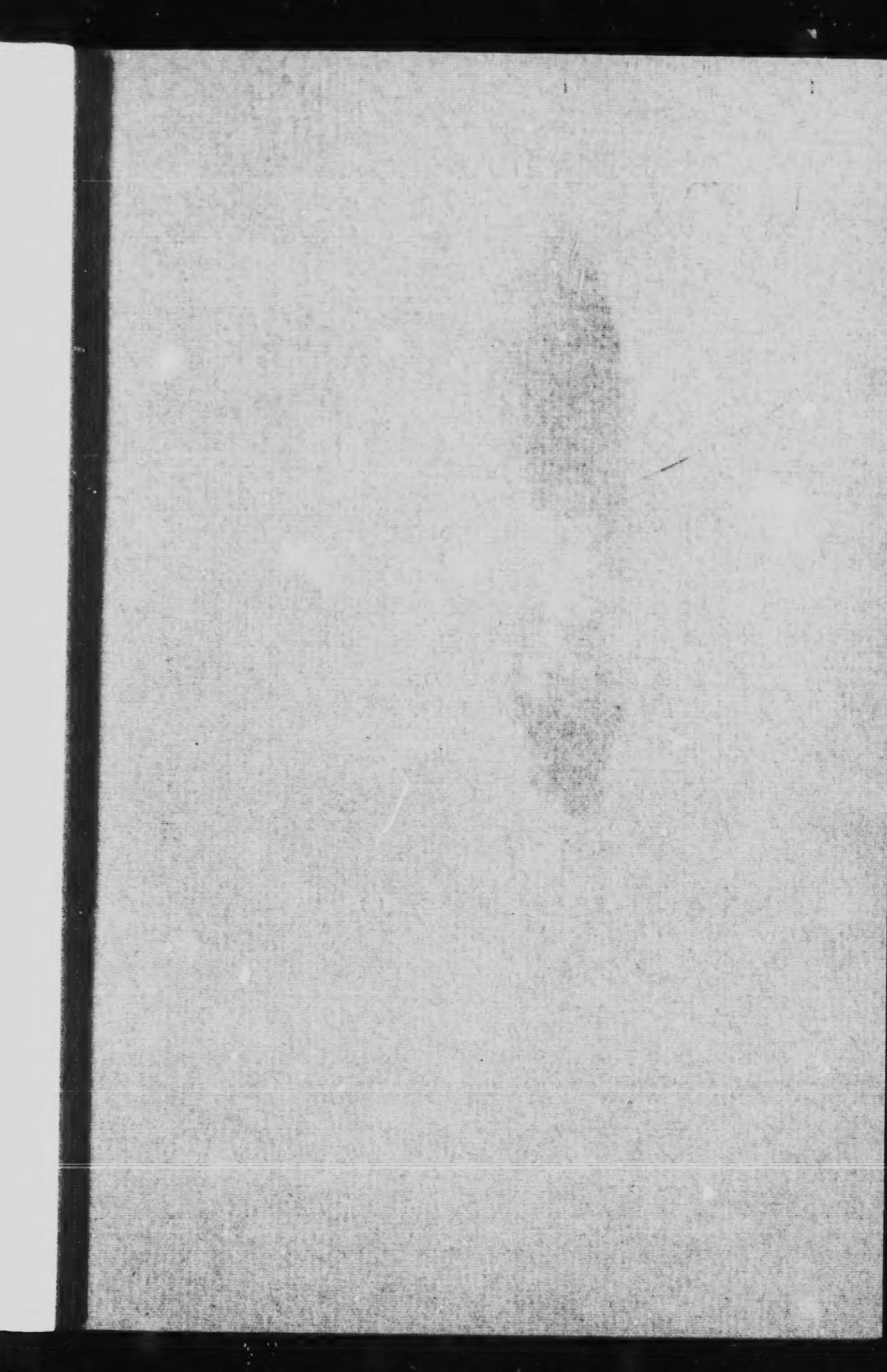




MASTER PAINTERS BY STEWART DICK

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

ARTS & CRAFTS OF OLD JAPAN
THE COTTAGE HOMES OF ENGLAND
THE HEART OF SPAIN
THE PAGEANT OF THE FORTH





REMBRANDT AND SASKIA

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MASTER
PAINTERS
being pages from
THE ROMANCE OF ART
by Stewart Dick

1975

TORONTO
THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY
LIMITED

ND150
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1912
P242

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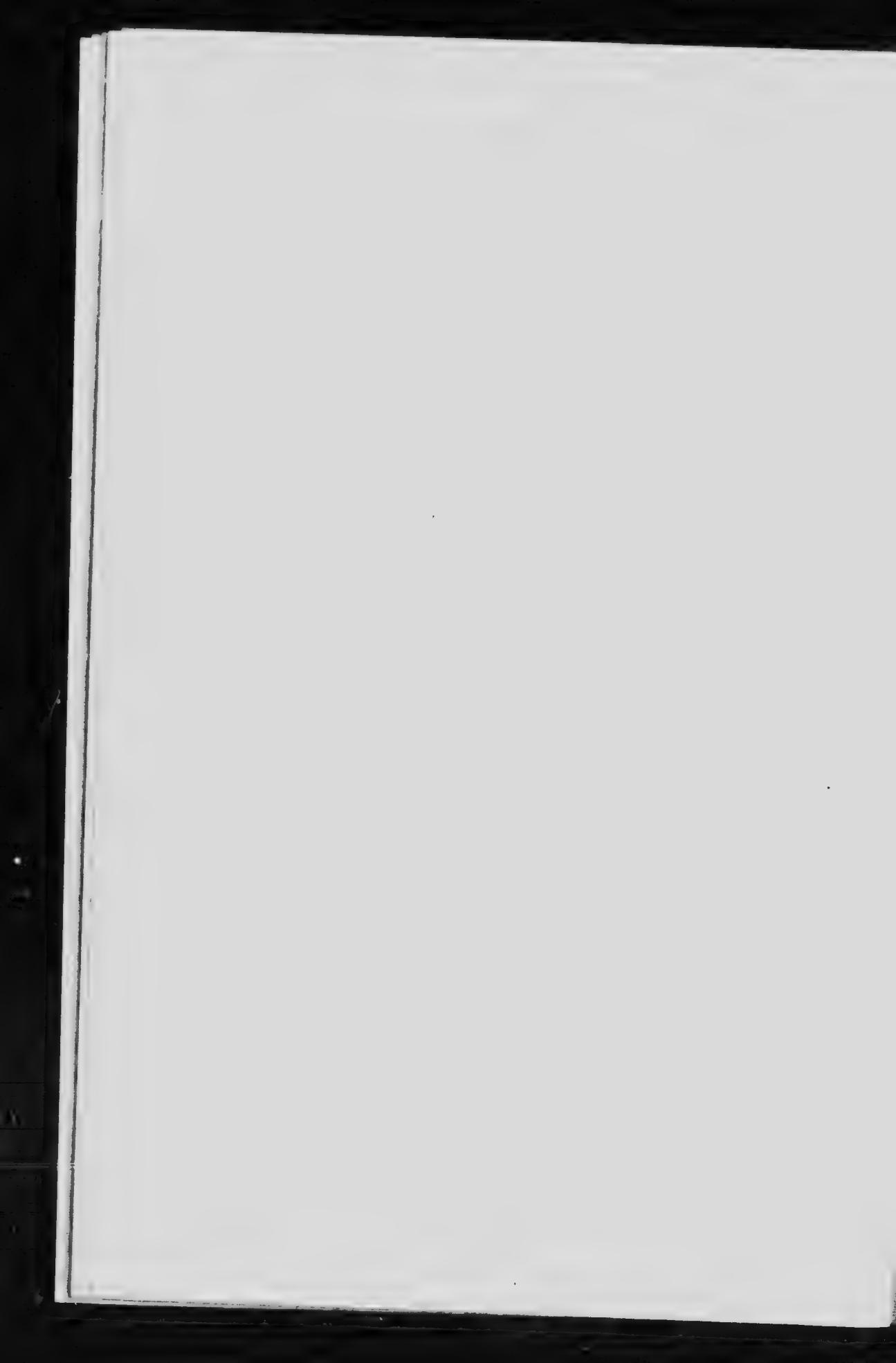
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CHAPTER ONE

ARTIST LIFE THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES

A



CHAPTER ONE ARTIST LIFE THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES

THE ARTIST'S LIFE HAS IN THE COURSE of the ages presented many phases to the world. Always a life apart from the multitude, for the main current of civilisation has run in intellectual channels, while the artist dwells in the world of sense, and speaks to us through its subtle suggestions. Once or twice, indeed, in the world's history, and for each art in turn, its channel has coincided with that of the great intellectual stream, and art has risen to sublime heights, transcending limits of time and place, at once universal and for all time.

So it was when the Greeks rebuilt the temples of Athens after the Persian Wars, and Phidias raised the faultless Parthenon, still perfect even in ruin. So it was for the art of painting in the great days of the Italian Renaissance, when the spirit of beauty descended again on the earth, resplendent in joyous colour, and borne in triumphal progress to the sound of universal rejoicings.

But the usual lot of the artist is far otherwise. The world in general has little use for beauty,

MASTER PAINTERS : ARTIST LIFE

and so he dwells as a man apart, building up a little world of his own. In this commercial age civilisation marches on to the clang and rattle of machinery, more and more efficient. The world has become an automaton ; it is wound up, and the stream keeps pouring out relentlessly—useful things, useless things, but all things that will sell, and all dead things. The artist is forced to take refuge in a back-water if he would produce living work.

But though the roaring current of modern life passes him by, yet never were people more curious to hear about the lives of artists and their doings.

Why is this? What is it that outsiders find so attractive about Bohemia? They would not live and work in a smell of paint and varnish and snatch scanty meals in the midst of the muddle. They have little taste for poverty, which is only picturesque to the outsider.

But they love to number an artist or two in their acquaintance—they like to go to afternoon tea in a studio.

And there is this sincerity in their professions, that we are all rebels at heart. All of us at times

THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES

feel the rules and conventions of society in these days become irksome, and the freer atmosphere that still pervades the domains of art, its childish vanities, even its vulgarisms, form a welcome relief.

Perhaps ordinary folks feel that here if at all in these prosaic days one may still surprise the elusive spirit of romance.

But Bohemia is only the last muddled phase of the artist's life, set in a modern world, in which he has no proper place of his own. In past ages there existed a definite niche for him in the scheme of things.

The first stage is that of the monastic painter. No art and no culture can come until there is leisure, and in a rude and stormy age the quiet life only flourished in the calm and shelter of the Church. Art was the handmaid of the Church, the painter was a man of God turning his eyes not on the things of this world but on visions of the life to come.

And so he pores over his parchment page, pencilling the gorgeous initials, quaintly intertwined with coiling grotesques, bright with sharp clear colour, red and blue and apple-

MASTER PAINTERS : ARTIST LIFE

green, and all ablaze with burnished gold. Here and there a full page gives a pictorial rendering of the text, and the Kingdom of Heaven is made visible to the eye in the quaint tumbled architecture of the Middle Ages ; and so the days slip by, the great bell rings to prayers, and outside the world goes on its way.

Not so is the greatest art produced ; the monkish painter was in a sense a deserter from life's battle. He had given his manhood for his art, and even then he had little independent life as an artist. He was part of the monastery, hardly an individual, his works for the most part unsigned, his memory unrecorded. Sometimes nature rebels at this, and a personal note emerges almost unawares in the stereotyped religious art.

In the British Museum is a fine specimen of the illuminator's art, a Lectionary in Latin executed about the year 1400 for Lord Lovel of Tichmersh. At the beginning the artist has devoted a full page to a pictorial representation of himself with dignified humility presenting the work of his hands to his patron, Lord Lovel. Both portraits are executed with the utmost

THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES

care and precision, and are full of character, while beneath the artist has inscribed his name, "Frater Johnes Siferwas."

Brother John must have been a well-known illuminator in his day, and another example of his work survives in the famous Sherborne Missal at Alnwick Castle.

But these are exceptions, and the work of the monkish illuminators was in the main only to build an unrecorded stone into the temple of the arts.

The next phase is the *bottega* or workshop of the Italian painters. Art had now broken loose from its monastic bonds, though for many years the Church was still its chief patron, and many artists still spent their working lives in the cloister. But the artist was primarily a craftsman. In every city in Italy were found these *bottegas*, where the leading men of their day practised their art. Here in his boyhood the youthful aspirant was apprenticed to some master, first sweeping the floor and grinding the colours, and as time went on, and his learning progressed, taking a more and more important part in the work,

MASTER PAINTERS : ARTIST LIFE

till he blossomed out as a full-fledged assistant. Busy little places these *bottegas* must have been, —studio, workshop, and showroom all combined, with a suggestion of the chemist's laboratory. For in those days the masters prepared their own colours and their own mediums, and many were the trade secrets that each jealously guarded.

It was a merry, joyous life, and in the pauses of producing their immortal works, those masters whose names we venerate to-day frolicked like schoolboys. The pages of Vasari are full of the pranks they played on each other. No longer a backwater, as in the old monastic days, the *bottega* was right in the full flood of social life, for art in Italy was part of the life of the people: great men called there as sitters or patrons, rival artists dropped in for criticism and advice; and from hints that Vasari lets fall, criticism then was as frank and free as it is among brethren of the brush to-day.

Add to this a dash of wildness in the blood: remember that men wore arms then, even at their peaceful employments; that every citizen was to some extent a soldier; that faction riots

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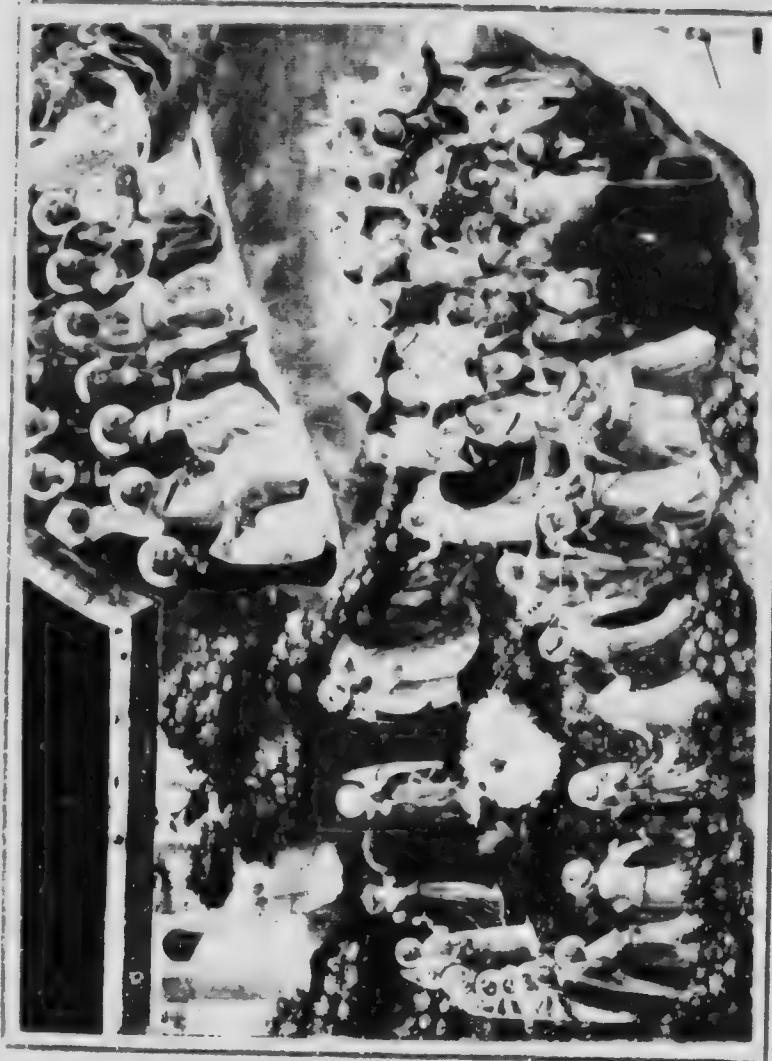
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DANCE OF ANGELS

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THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES

partook of the nature of pitched battles ; that law and order were regarded but lightly, and human life hardly at all, and you will have some faint idea of the surging life that filled those Italian cities in the fifteenth century.

What has the modern world to give in exchange for the *bottega*? Well, we have the Schools of Art. Instead of entering a workshop where from beginning to end the pupil was in touch with actual work, helping, however humbly, to supply what the public wanted, now he learns principles forsooth, he lives in the school instead of the world, he is full of the formulæ of the school-men and he expects to be patronised by a world with which he is out of touch, and which he despises and does not understand. And so, of the students few rise superior to their environment, most of them are stifled there. The bulk of our vigorous artists develop outside the schools.

The real world of art to-day is still that which is closest in touch with nature, and farthest from rules and formulæ, though here and there in centres like the *Quartier Latin* of Paris or in Chelsea, there is a colony where artists con-

MASTER PAINTERS: ARTIST LIFE

gregate and to some extent form a social atmosphere of their own.

To show phases of art life in the different periods, as well as to trace out the fortunes of individual artists, will be my object in the following chapters.

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CHAPTER TWO

THREE MONKISH PAINTERS : FRA
ANGELICO, FRA FILIPPO LIPPI,
AND FRA BARTOLOMMEO

THE THREE MONKISH PAINTERS FRA ANGELICO, FRA FILIPPO LIPPI, AND FRA BARTOLOMMEO

OF ALL ITALIAN PAINTERS FRA ANGELICO, though he lived at a time when art had overflowed the old monastic barriers and become part of the stream of civic life, most completely fulfils the ideal of the old monkish painter. He was a man of God, his thoughts and his art alike wrapt up in holy things. No breath of passion ever disturbs the serenity of his saints and angels, no earthly dross mixes with his heavenly visions. Neither has the sterner side of religion any place in his art, he preached entirely a gospel of love. In his "Last Judgment" the torments of the damned do not attract his brush, but a ring of saints and angels dancing sweetly and solemnly on a fair green sward jewelled with flowers. Little wonder that the halo of saintliness which surrounds him has almost obscured his merits as a painter. He was born in 1387, in the little village of Vicchio, in the valley of the Mugello, near Florence. Here his boyhood was spent amid the beauties of nature. "A fair and pleasant

FRA ANGELICO, FRA FILIPPO

land it is," writes a contemporary chronicler "decked with fruits luscious and delightsome watered and made beautiful as a garden by a limpid river, which winds about the plain like a trailing garland,"—a fitting environment for the painter who loved nature almost as well as he loved God.

It is thought that in his boyhood Guido da Vecchio, as he was called, must have entered some painter's *bottega* to receive the thorough training necessary for an artist's career, a supposition to which the masterly technique of even his first-known works lends ground.

But in his youth an event occurred which turned him aside from a more worldly career, and led him to seek the quiet shelter of the cloister. In those days, just at the dawn of the fifteenth century, so eventful in the history of human art and thought, Florence was the great centre of the literary and artistic revival which was stirring all Italy. Greek literature had just been rediscovered and crowded audiences attended the lectures of its professors; Greek art was revealing its beauties anew to the eager eyes of all. Old manuscripts and fragments of

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LIPPI, AND FRA BARTOLOMMEO

ancient sculpture were sought for as men seek gold.

But with the revival of classic culture, and the worship of pagan literature and art, came a recrudescence of pagan vices and excesses, which turned many serious spirits against the new movement.

Among these a great Dominican preacher and scholar, Giovanni Dominici, did his best to stem the tide. His fiery eloquence was heard from end to end of Italy, and as a practical measure he established Dominican houses of a sterner rule than before, governed by men of his own way of thinking.

In Florence, among those who fell under his potent influence were Guido da Vicchio, then a lad of twenty, and his brother Benedetto. In 1407 the two brothers entered the reformed Dominican convent that stands on the lower slopes of the hill at Fiesole.

It is idle to speculate what the artist's career might otherwise have been. In any case, it seems certain that by nature and temperament the young painter was eminently fitted for the quiet and uneventful monastic life. His char-

FRA ANGELICO, FRA FILIPPO

acter, as recorded by the kindly and garrulous Vasari, shows one little suited for the rough and tumble of this work-a-day world.

"Fra Giovanni," he says, "was the simplest of men, and most holy in his actions ; it is a proof of his simple good faith, that being invited to breakfast by Pope Nicholas v. he scrupled to eat meat without the permission of his Prior forgetting about the higher authority of the Pope. He set aside all things of the world, and living chastely and holily, was so good a friend to the poor that I think his soul must now be in heaven.

"He laboured continually at his painting, but would touch none but sacred subjects. He might have been rich, but he had no wish for wealth. Indeed he would say that true riches lay solely in contentment with little.

"He might have ruled many but did not care to, saying that there was less fatigue and less chance of error in obeying others. . . . He was kind-hearted and sober, living temperately, and shunning the snares of the world. He used to say that he who practised painting had need of quiet, and freedom from care ; and that he

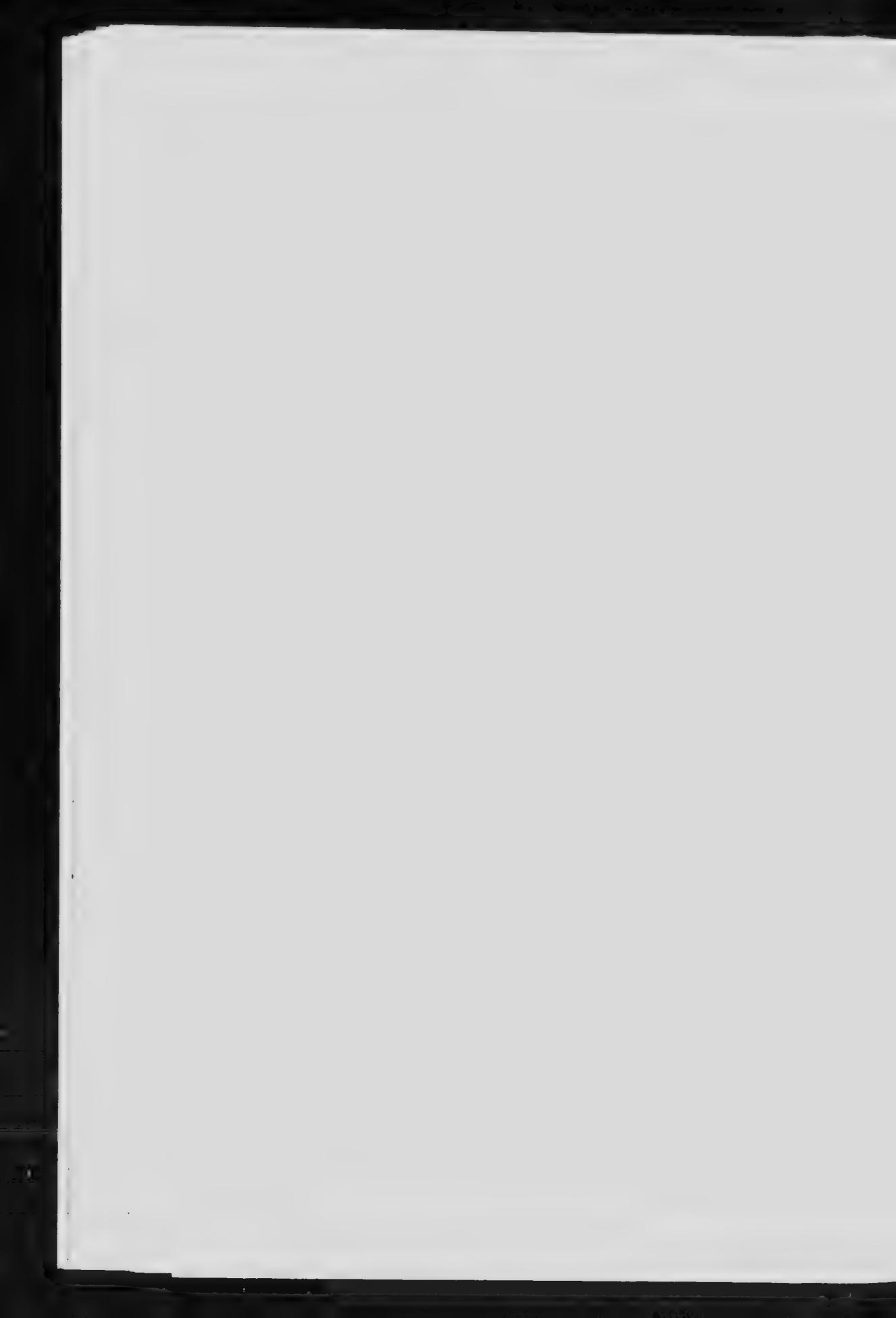
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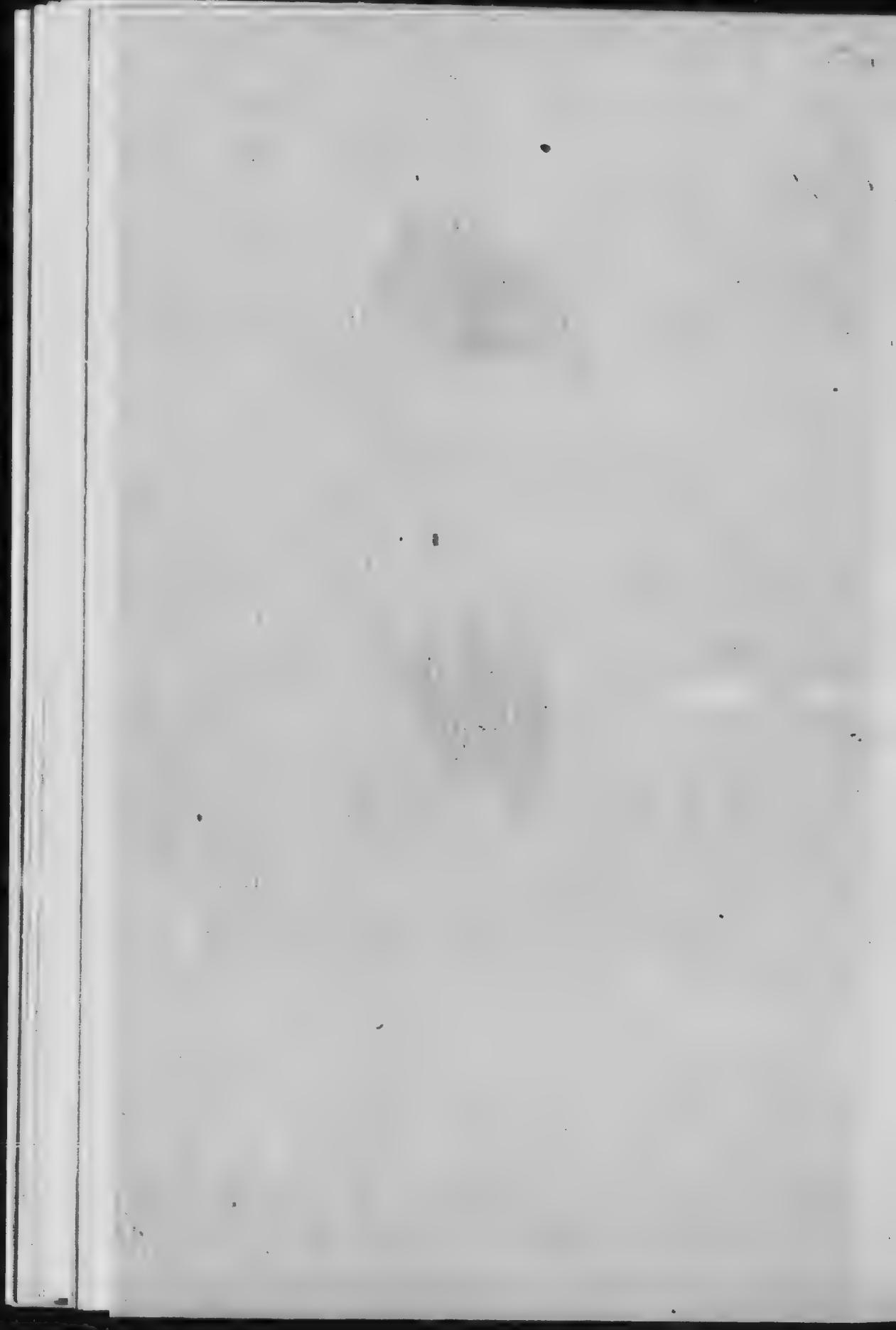


LUCREZIA BUTTI

Pitti Gallery

Foto Enrico Lippi

H. STÜCKEN - COPENHAGEN



LIPPI, AND FRA BARTOLOMMEO

who would do the things of Christ, should always be with Christ. He was never known to show anger to his fellow-friars, a thing wonderful and to me almost incredible ; but if he admonished his friends, did so gently with a smile. With extraordinary goodwill he asked those who sought his works to first settle the price with the Prior, and that then he would not fail them."

Such is Vasari's portrait of the unworldly friar.

And so, surrounded with the odour of sanctity, he passed his uneventful existence. A sweet and holy life leaving a record of noble work, but to us sad even in its beauty. The tempest of human love, with its joys and sorrows, never swept over the surface of that placid lake, reflecting in its limpid purity the glory of the heavens. The good friar's madonnas and angels are not of this world, they seem to float in a rarefied atmosphere of their own.

The great work of the painter's life was the decorating of his own convent of San Marco, newly built by the Florentine architect Michelozzo, where he spent about ten years.

FRA ANGELICO, FRA FILIPPO

The whole convent, in 1867 thrown open to the public as the "Musee di San Marco," is indeed filled with the spirit of Fra Angelico. In the cloisters just opposite the entrance is the beautiful St. Dominic at the foot of the cross, and five lunettes fill the spaces above the doorways. The chapter-house bears his great crucifixion, unfinished, alas, for the brilliant blue of the sky was never laid on the ground of dull red prepared for it; and in the upper floor the corridors even are adorned with frescoes, while each of the forty cells has what the good friar used to call "a window into heaven."

But if one were asked to select one picture which would most truly reflect the mind of Fra Angelico it is not to the frescoes of San Marco, beautiful as they are, that we would turn, but to the "Last Judgment," painted early in the artist's life for the convent of Sta. Maria degli Angeli, and now in the Academy at Florence. And here it is one section of the picture that holds us, "Il Ballo dei Angeli," saints and angels dancing in a ring in an enchanted garden full of flowers.

But though to one born a saint, like Fra

LIPPI, AND FRA BARTOLOMMEO

Angelico, the monastery is a refuge not a prison, yet his was not the happy lot of all monkish painters.

Vasari puts the case very shrewdly : " Although each one in his own station may serve God, yet to some it appears that they may better secure their salvation in the monastery than in the world. Which plan with the godly succeeds happily, but on the other hand those who enter the monastery for other ends are truly miserable and unhappy."

In the life of Fra Filippo Lippi, a contemporary of Fra Angelico, we see the unhappy results of the inborn conflict between the natural man and this restrictive environment.

For the unhappy friar, whose name has become almost the symbol of a monkish Falstaff, has at least this excuse ; that long ere he was of an age to choose for himself he was hustled into the cloister by the force of circumstances. That when he grew to manhood and saw the world open before him, the fetters were already on his limbs.

Fra Filippo Lippi, the son of a butcher, Tommaso di Lippo, was born in Florence about the
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FRA ANGELICO, FRA FILIPPO

year 1406, close to the Carmelite convent which so soon became his home. His mother died shortly after he was born, and on the death of his father, when he was two years old, he was left to the care of his aunt Mona Lapaccia. When he was eight, the never-ceasing struggle against poverty became too much for the poor woman, and enlisting the sympathy of the Prior of the Carmelite convent she handed the boy over to his charge.

Here the good monks endeavoured to give him the best education they could, but Filippo manifested a most healthy dislike to learning of any kind, though in anything savouring of craftsmanship his fingers were nimble and clever. In painting especially he proved himself extraordinarily apt, and the Prior was only too glad to encourage his bent.

It must have been while Filippo was still young that Masaccio painted the great frescoes in the Brancacci chapel, the wonderful paintings which made this little church the school of all the great Italian painters for more than a hundred years after. In all probability Filippo watched the master at work and had the benefit

LIPPI, AND FRA BARTOLOMMEO

of his actual advice and instruction; in any case, he, along with the other young students, was never tired of studying the completed paintings, copying them again and again in every detail—a work in which he easily surpassed all his fellow-students.

Here he greatly pleased the Prior and the other members of the monastery, for art was still the handmaid of the Church, and had not the rival Dominicans just produced their great painter, Fra Angelico? Who knew but what in good time the youthful scapegrace might not rival his artistic fame, though even the honest Prior could have had little hope of his rivalling his sanctity. So the boy was happy and worked with such good will that soon it was said that the spirit of Masaccio had entered into the body of Filippo.

No doubt the facilities which it gave him for continuing his artistic training must have gone far to reconcile the boy to the monastic discipline, but his lack of learning remained with him to the end of his life, and when he introduced a Latin inscription into his pictures as like as not it was misspelt.

FRA ANGELICO, FRA FILIPPO

In 1421, probably sorely against his will, he took the vows as a member of the community. About the year 1431, a fully fledged friar, he seems to have left the monastery, and placed himself under the patronage of Cosimo de' Medici, one of the wealthiest and most generous of art patrons, and future ruler of Florence,—a choice showing the friar, however deficient in book learning, not to be lacking in natural shrewdness.

Florence, when Cosimo de' Medici returned from his exile in Padua in 1434, was in the hey-day of its artistic prosperity. Lorenzo Ghiberti was at work then on the great bronze doors of the Baptistry; Brunelleschi and Michelozzo were busy with their architectural masterpieces; Donatello was reviving the glories of the classic world in the field of sculpture.

So now we see the young friar turned out into the great gay world, mixing with men of talent, like them a man of no mean qualifications, but worthy to rank with the best, robust in constitution, fond of the good things of life, as of everything beautiful; a vigorous healthy man, but sworn a celibate friar.

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What wonder if he was known as the jolly friar? Under the patronage of the most powerful man in Florence his peccadillos were merely smiled at; in the easy morals of the day his outstanding artistic capacity easily outweighed such faults.

Vasari records that once Cosimo de' Medici, irritated at the non-completion of an important commission, locked up the monk in his chambers, telling him the work must be finished ere he was set free. But after two days of confinement Filippo could stand it no longer. Cutting the sheets of his bed into strips and twining them into a rope he let himself down from the window, and was only recaptured after several days' carousal. It was fortunate for him that his patron treated the matter lightly, saying that the fault was his own in attempting so rudely to confine the wings of genius.

It is interesting to note that the two lunettes by Fra Filippo Lippi in the National Gallery, one representing the Annunciation, the other St. John the Baptist and saints, both early examples of the artist, bear the arms of Cosimo de' Medici (three feathers in a ring), and were

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taken from the Riccardi Palace, originally the palace of the Medici, and sold to the Riccardi family in the seventeenth century. Who knows then but what they were the actual pictures on which he was employed during his compulsory confinement?

And so, still a friar of the Carmelites, though roaming at large, he plays his part in the art world of Florence, enjoying the good things of the world, but industrious in his art, and leaving behind him a legacy of beauty to gladden the hearts of his successors. He never lacked commissions but was always at a loss for money, for with him it melted away like snow. In his hands, and to no small extent is this due to his revulsion from the bonds and restrictions of the monastic life, art assumed a sweetness and humanity it had not hitherto known. His madonnas are women of flesh and blood, no less beautiful, and so much more human than the abstractions of his predecessors; his little angels are often mere roguish boys, for the friar was a great lover of children. Less lofty in tone no doubt his work is, but who can quarrel with him for being of the world

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when the world he depicts for us is so fair?

With all his failings, too, the friar was a man of good heart and kindly disposition.

Mr. Edward C. Strutt, in his interesting life of the painter, quotes a letter from him written in 1439 to Pietro de' Medici :—“It is clear that I am the poorest friar in all Florence. God has left me with six unmarried nieces, infirm and helpless, and the little they have on earth comes from me. If you could only let me have a little corn and wine at your house, selling it to me on credit and putting it to my account, it would be a great joy for me. I implore you with tears in my eyes to grant me this favour, so that if I have to go away I may leave these poor children provided for.”

Let us hope that his patron granted the request. In 1441 he completed his great picture, the “Coronation of the Virgin,” for the nuns of Sant’ Ambrogio. Here we have exemplified the friar’s outlook on life ; the company of the angels and saints are joyous maidens, they wear no heavenly aureoles, but their brows are bound with garlands of roses. In the foreground a beautiful woman fondles her children,

FRA ANGELICO, FRA FILIPPO

and at one side the friar has introduced his own portrait. A burly thick-set figure it is, with a kindly, good-humoured face. This picture not only established his artistic reputation but ushered in a period of comparative prosperity, for he shortly after obtained the appointment of Rector of San Quirico a Legnaja, near Florence. In 1455, however, he was deprived of the post for neglect of his duties.

In 1452 the friar left Florence for Prato, a little town some twelve miles away, with an important commission to execute a series of frescoes in the Duomo there. A fateful journey, albeit only of twelve miles, for now we enter on the most interesting period of Fra Filippo's life. Not only do the frescoes in the Duomo rank as his masterpieces, but, here at the age of fifty, he entered on the romantic intrigue which was the great passion of his life.

In the first picture he painted in Prato, a *tondo* (round painting) for a Florentine patron, and now in the Pitti Gallery, appears for the first time the sad yet piquant face that was to haunt him till the end of his life, recurring again and again in his work, always painted with fresh

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interest and delight. It is the face of Lucrezia Buti, a young nun who had entered on her novitiate in Prato shortly before his arrival there. Like Fra Filippo the young girl had drifted into the fold of the Church without any wish of her own. Her father, a small Florentine silk-merchant, had died, leaving Lucrezia and her sister Spinetta and a number of small brothers and sisters to the care of an elder step-brother. We need hardly wonder that he sought to lighten his burden and relieved himself of the charge of the two sisters by handing them over to the care of the Church. And so at the ages of eighteen and seventeen the two girls find themselves bidding farewell to the life of the world with all its joys and sorrows, to drag out a weary and monotonous existence within the convent walls.

It could not have been long after her arrival there that Fra Filippo painted the Pitti *tondo*, and how he obtained permission for her to act as his model we do not know ; perhaps it was accounted an honour for a nun to pose as the Holy Virgin, for it is no memory sketch, but a loving portrait painted from life. The slender

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girl, sad and wan, yet with a faint half smile, seems brooding over the world she has left. It was a strange spell that this young girl cast over the volatile monk, for it was no passing infatuation, but a steady and enduring passion surviving many vicissitudes of fortune, and, by special dispensation of the Pope, ending in a happy married life.

Four years after the painting of this first portrait of Lucrezia, Fra Filippo was appointed chaplain to the nuns of Santa Margherita, and shortly afterwards was commissioned by the abbess to paint a picture of the Madonna holding in her hands the sacred girdle which is preserved in the Duomo of Prato. Now was Fra Filippo's opportunity, and he obtained permission for the young Lucrezia Buti to act again as his model. In this picture, known as the "Madonna della Cintola," now in the Municipal Palace, Prato, it is rather in the delicate profile of St. Margaret than in the features of the Virgin, that we recognise the young nun.

Vasari says that it was stipulated that another nun should be present at the sittings,

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"But love will enter in
Where it daurna well be seen,
And love will enter in
Where wisdom once has been,"

and perhaps the simple nuns were not difficult to outwit.

And so on the day of the feast of the Madonna della Cintola, when the nuns of Santa Margherita, with the rest of the town, attended the great service held in the Duomo, a great scandal arose. Lucrezia Buti had disappeared, and she was finally found in the house of Fra Filippo. In spite of threats and entreaties she firmly refused to return to the convent, and a few days later she was joined by her younger sister Spinetta. Indeed the whole convent appears to have become demoralised, for three other nuns disappeared in rapid succession. The poor abbess was distracted, and it is feared that the shame and mortification hurried her into her grave, for she died a few months afterwards.

About a year later Lucrezia gave birth to a boy, who, as Filippino Lippo, was destined to carry on the art and traditions of his father.

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But the poor girl found that the new life was not all roses. Fra Filippo was harassed by creditors and hard put to it to maintain his new dependants. Perhaps, too, her friends were putting strong pressure on her, and her broken vows weighed heavily on her conscience. Anyhow, towards the end of 1458, the two sisters humbly sought readmittance to the convent, and after undergoing anew their year's novitiate, became once more nuns of Santa Margherita.

Fra Filippo, however, still retained his position as chaplain of the convent, an evidence both of the laxity of the age and the power of his patrons, so that the separation was only partial, and the tongues of scandal were soon busy again.

Formal charges were brought against Fra Filippo, and the ecclesiastical authorities finding them only too well founded, deprived him of his chaplaincy and forbade him ever again to enter the convent doors.

The friar was mad with grief, and turned for help to his former patrons, the Medici. But all ended happily, for on the intervention of

LIPPI, AND FRA BARTOLOMMEO

these powerful friends, Pope Pius II. was induced to grant the painter a special dispensation releasing both Fra Filippo and Lucrezia from their vows, and enabling them to live together as man and wife. And so the beautiful face of Lucrezia appears again and again in the Duomo of Prato frescoes, for until the end of the painter's life she remained his inspiration and ideal.

The frescoes of the Duomo at Prato were finished in 1465, and stand as the painter's masterpieces. In 1467, bidding farewell to his wife and children, he set out for Spoleto to carry out a series of works in the Cathedral there. Here two years later he died suddenly, his last painting being a representation of the "Death of the Virgin."

He was buried in the Cathedral of Spoleto, and a few years afterwards Lorenzo de' Medici went there to petition for the removal of the artist's remains to Florence, but the people of Spoleto replied "that they were poorly provided with ornaments, and above all they lacked famous men ; they therefore craved permission to honour themselves by retaining his

FRA ANGELICO, FRA FILIPPO

body, seeing that Florence possessed almost a superfluity of famous men, and so might well be content without this one."

So Lorenzo was fain to content himself by commissioning Filippino, the painter's son, to erect a stately marble monument over his father's grave.

We now turn to a third monkish painter, Fra Bartolommeo, a name, like that of Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi, occupying a place second only to the very highest in Italian Art. The romance of his life is not that of the saint on earth like Fra Angelico, nor of the natural man imprisoned in a holy garb, like Filippo ; but is the story of a close and lasting friendship between man and man, like that of David and Jonathan "passing the love of woman."

When little Baccio della Porta ("Baccio of the Gateway," so called from the house near the city gate where he lived) entered the *bottega* of Cosimo Rosselli in 1488 at the age of nine years, his fellow-apprentice was Mariotto Albertinelli, a boy some years older. Never were two characters more strongly contrasted.

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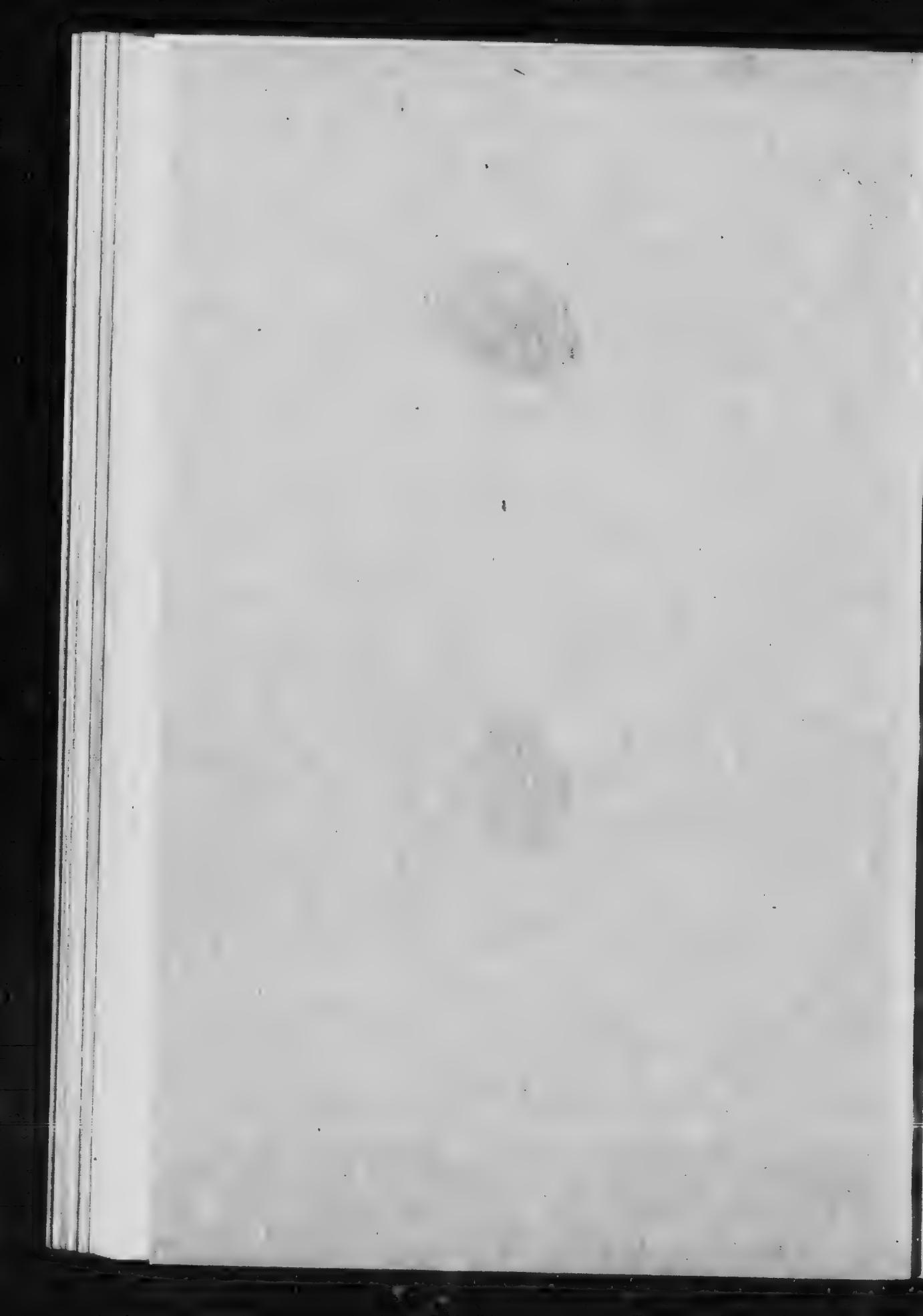
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FRA FILIPPO LIPPI (RELIEF FROM TOMB)
Duomo-SPOLETO

HANFTÄNGL COLLECTION



LIPPI, AND FRA BARTOLOMMEO

Baccio, quiet and timid and retiring, with the dreamy artist's soul ; Mariotto, alert and vivacious, full of pranks and mischief, the very life of the workshop. But between this oddly assorted pair thrown together in their menial tasks of grinding colours, sweeping the workshop, and running errands, there sprang up the close fellowship that was to last throughout their lives, surviving the rudest shocks and jars that differences of character, of taste, or of religious and political creeds, could bring.

The foreman of the workshop, who had assisted his master in the frescoes just completed in the chapel of the Vatican, was Piero di Cosimo, a youth of eighteen, of an envious, moody temper, but an artist of great talent, a quaint and charming example of whose work we have in the "Procris" of the National Galleri. Full of interest the work of the *bottega* was, for the new method of painting in oil was just making its way into Italy, and every one was experimenting with new pigments and vehicles.

As time went on and the boys grew to youth their tastes diverged. While the devout Baccio loved to spend his days in the quiet of

FRA ANGELICO, FRA FILIPPO

the Brancacci Chapel, copying the frescoes of Masaccio, Mariotto joined the band of riotous youths who frequented the gardens of the Medici, working from the antiques there. A wonderful statue gallery it must have been. Each shady loggia with its arched colonnades enshrining the new-discovered marvels of classic art, while, almost touching this art of a bygone day, the fresh green leaves stirred in the soft summer breezes, gilded with the warm rays of the sun.

Donna Alfonsino, the mother of Lorenzo de' Medici, especially took an interest in the work of the boy, commissioned him to paint her portrait, and purchased other of his works.

Meantime the two youths had left Cosimo Rosselli, and in partnership set up a *bottega* of their own, about the year 1490.

But other causes of discord arose. Florence, under the rule of the Medici, was seething with discontent.

A new preacher, Savonarola, had arisen whose fiery words were inflaming the hearts of the people. He distrusted with all his heart the pagan elements in the luxurious life of the city

LIPPI, AND FRA BARTOLOMMEO

and boldly denounced its evil tendencies.

His adherents included many of the most thoughtful men of the day, some of them artists, for Lorenzo di Credi, the Della Robbias, Sandro Botticelli, and the youthful Baccio were among his followers. Young Mariotto, on the other hand, flung in his lot with the Palleschi, followers of the Medici (whose coat of arms bore six balls (*palle*), popularly believed to represent pills, and to indicate that the family had originally been apothecaries), and who numbered in their ranks the gayer and more reckless elements of Florentine society.

For a time the two drifted apart, and Mariotto left the studio to work at the Palace, but, alas, the fabric of his fortunes collapsed in the crash which resulted in the banishment of the Medici, and the year 1494 sees him back again in Baccio's studio working in partnership with him. Such a partnership in those days was a case of actual collaboration, the two men working on the same canvas, as Fra Filippo and his assistant Fra Diamante did years before. Though in art Baccio's was the dominating spirit, yet the impressionable Mariotto as-

FRA ANGELICO, FRA FILIPPO

similated his style to such a degree that it was exceedingly difficult to separate the work of the two.

It must have been about this time, in the year 1495, that Baccio painted the portrait of Savonarola, inscribing it "A portrait of the prophet sent by God." Savonarola was then Prior of San Marco, the convent hallowed by the associations of Fra Angelico.

On Shrove Tuesday it was the custom of the Florentines to kindle bonfires in the street and dance round them with songs and rejoicings, but under the spell of the friar's preaching this festivity took a new form on Shrove Tuesday 1496, when musicians laid their instruments on the fire, artists their pictures, authors their books; a bonfire of "vanities," of all that tended in the stern eyes of Savonarola to turn the mind from thoughts of heaven to the grosser pleasures of earth.

Among the *Piagnoni* (*i.e.* mourners or weepers) who took part in this voluntary sacrifice were Baccio, his friend Lorenzo di Credi, and many others, who cast their nude studies on the flames. We can imagine how Mariotto

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LIPPI, AND FRA BARTOLOMMEO

sumed and raged at what to him was desecration, not mere destruction.

But Savonarola had many enemies, the Medici party was still powerful, and his boldly advocated reform struck too directly at those in high places ; he was forbidden by Pope Alessandro vi. to preach, and on his refusing to obey came his excommunication on June 22, 1497.

Next year he preached again, but the populace rose against him, and, finally, on the 8th of April, a tumultuous mob attacked the convent of San Marco. Savonarola and his adherents, Luca della Robbia and Baccio among them, were in the church when the doors were battered down and the armed mob rushed in. Men were killed on the altar steps, Savonarola was seized and taken away, to die a martyr's death a few weeks later.

Many of the friars fought bravely, Luca della Robbia stormed through the cloisters with a sword, but the timid Baccio fled in terror from the scene vowing that if his life were spared he would forsake the world for the Church.

On the 23rd of May Savonarola was publicly executed, his body burned, and his ashes cast

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into the Arno. During all this period of strife the cords that bound the two friends remained still unbroken, and when on 26th July 1500, at the age of twenty-five, Baccio fulfilled the vow made in the hour of peril at San Marco and joined the Dominican order at Prato, he handed over his uncompleted work to the hands of his old comrade. So here the history of Baccio della Porta ends and that of Fra Bartolommeo begins.

But how did Mariotto fare, when his friend disappeared behind the walls of the cloister? For a time he was quite distracted, vowed he too would give up painting, and, but that he hated the monks like poison, would enter the cloister too. Then the task his friend had left him, the completion of his unfinished "Last Judgment," appealed to him as a sacred duty, and he carried it out religiously, much to the satisfaction of the patron.

But working alone had little charm for him, and once in a fit of disgust he actually opened a tavern, saying he would purvey real flesh and blood instead of depicting it in paint, and swearing roundly that he preferred his new

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occupation, as friends now praised his good wine, whereas before they had blamed his bad pictures. However, the fit passed and he was soon back again at his work.

In 1504 he was able to do a further service to his old friend by acting as guardian to his young brother Piero, who had succeeded to the little property he possessed and was ruling it unwisely.

In 1506 we hear of him working at a crucifixion in the Certosa, Florence, where his assistants, no doubt with his connivance, dissatisfied with the rations allowed them, made skeleton keys to open the windows of the cells and stole the dinners of the friars to supplement their own.

For some six years Bartolommeo, now an inmate of the convent of San Marco, hallowed to him by so many associations, never touched a brush, but urged by the Prior of the convent he was at last induced to take up again his life work. About this time too the young Raphael was in Florence and the two great painters each gained from association with the other.

A visit to Venice in 1508 probably gave the

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artist a welcome change of scene, and the acquaintance with Venetian art still further stimulated his powers. But his assistants in the convent were unsatisfactory, and his heart went out to his old friend.

So, in 1509, a most unique arrangement was entered into between the monk and Mariotto, whose love for Bartolommeo overcame his hatred of the order, whereby the old partnership was revived, the monk's share of the profits going to the convent.

The joint works issued from their hands were signed with the monogram of a cross and two intersecting circles, and many of the finest works of each painter date from this period.

But, alas, in 1512 a new Prior was appointed to San Marco, who caused the partnership to be dissolved, and once more Mariotto returned to his lonely studio.

He continued to work, however, industriously, executing many commissions.

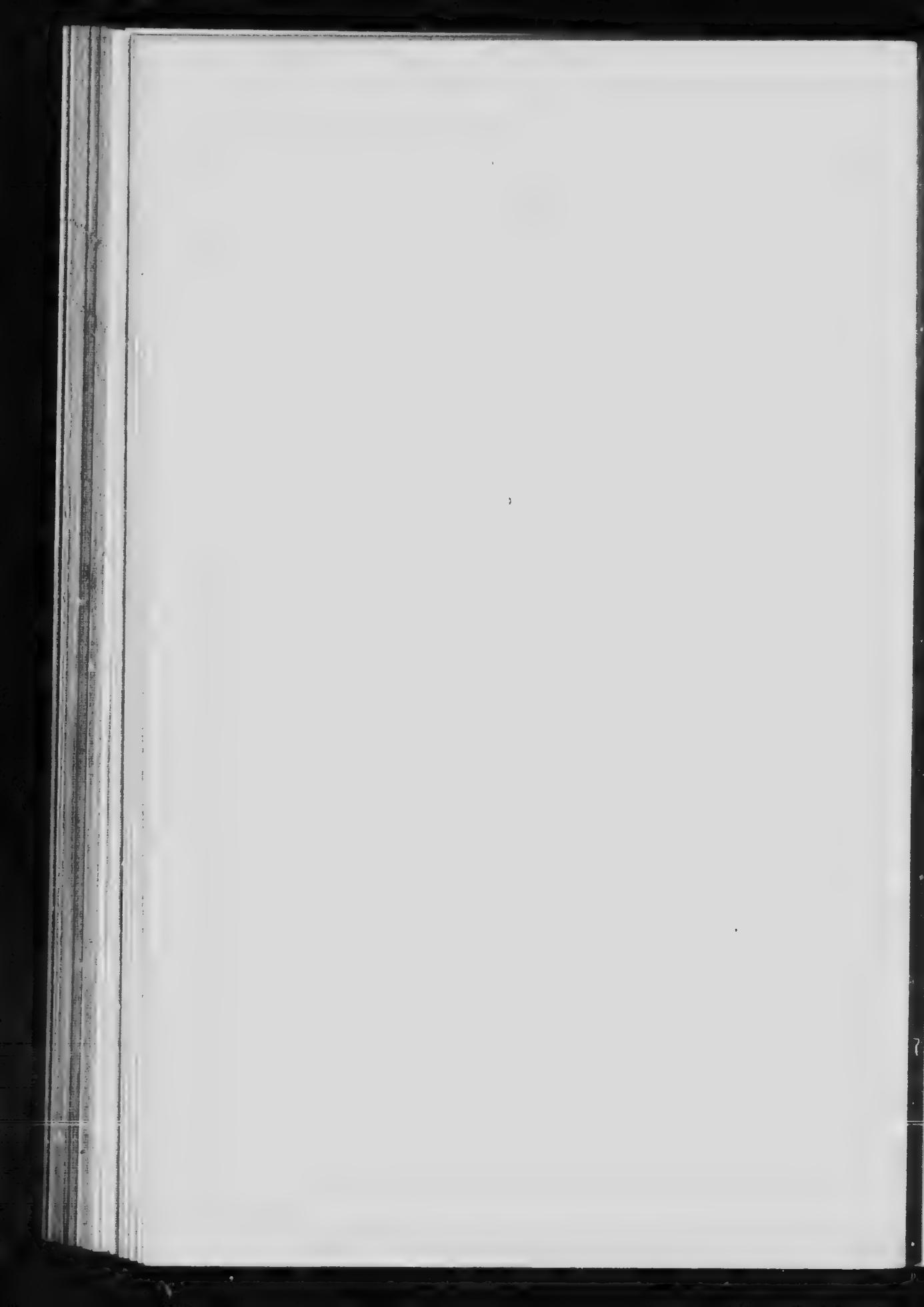
During the following years both friends visited Rome, independently, Fra Bartolommeo contracting a fever there, which never allowed him to regain his former health.

LIPPI, AND FRA BARTOLOMMEO

In 1515 Mariotto, then at Quercia, a' energetic and extravagant in his ways, contracted an illness owing to over-exertion at the games of a festival, and was carried home in a litter to Florence. Here the two met once more, and attended by his beloved friend, Mariotto's staunch but turbulent spirit passed away.

Fra Bartolommeo lived only two years longer, and died in the autumn of 1517 at the early age of forty-two.

He was buried with great honour by his brethren of San Marco, who recognised in him a worthy successor to the saintly Fra Angelico.



CHAPTER THREE

**LEONARDO DA VINCI THE WIZARD
OF THE RENAISSANCE**



CHAPTER THREE DA VINCI, WIZARD OF THE RENAISSANCE

THE GREATEST GIFTS ARE OFTEN SEEN

"to be showered by the heavenly powers on certain individuals in extraordinary profusion, miraculously combining in the one personality, beauty, grace, and ability, in such a measure that whatever he may turn to, his every action is so divine as to leave all other men far behind ; clearly manifesting that his powers have been bestowed by God and not acquired by human art. This was evident to all in Leonardo da Vinci, in whom, besides the beauty of his person, never sufficiently to be extolled, every action was marked by infinite grace, and so extraordinary were his powers that to whatever difficult matter he turned his mind, he mastered it with facility and ease. Strength in his case was combined with dexterity. A mind bold and regal, and full of magnanimity. And the renown of his name so spread abroad, that not only during his lifetime was he held in the highest esteem, but now he is even more honoured after his death."

With these appropriate words Vasari prefaces

MASTER PAINTERS : DA VINCI,

his life of Leonardo da Vinci, probably the most amazingly versatile genius in the history of mankind. In this one figure is concentrated the essence of the Renaissance spirit. Its intense artistic perception, its wonderful technical facility which assimilates without effort the processes of half a dozen branches of art, its eager and insatiable curiosity prying deeply into the secrets of nature,—and yet combined with all these a strange mystical spirit, a frank credulousness blending history and mythology, science and astrology, into one strange compound. Not only was he the first painter of the Renaissance in whom art reached its full maturity, preceding by a generation Raphael, Michael Angelo, Correggio, and the other giants of that brief period of full fruition, but in addition the whole range of the physical sciences lay at his feet.

The greater part of his life was occupied in scientific researches. He was renowned throughout Italy as a military engineer; with the arts of peace he was equally conversant. He formed plans of irrigation, and for the cutting of canals, rivalling the works of the

WIZARD OF THE RENAISSANCE

Romans in their boldness. His knowledge of anatomy was unequalled in his day. He seems to have passed over all the fields of human endeavour with but two significant exceptions. He had nothing to do with trade, nothing to do with politics. Money came to him easily, he spent it freely, living like a prince with a retinue of servants. As for politics he had none, he served one master as readily as another, all his interest lay in the work.

A romance surrounds the story of Leonardo's birth. In the little village of Vinci, not far from Florence, a wealthy family of notaries had lived for several generations. The father, Ser Antonio, had presumably retired from business and the son carried it on at Florence, making frequent visits to his father's house in the country. In the outskirts of the village was a little inn, where a comely orphan girl Caterina attended to the needs of the customers. The young advocate fell in love with the country girl, and would have married her but the father interposed with decision, and "love's young dream" was rudely shattered. The son was sent off to Florence, there to

MASTER PAINTERS : DA VINCI,

marry shortly after a lady of his own rank, and possessed of the additional attraction of an ample dowry ; the hapless Caterina, soon after the birth of her baby boy, was wedded to an elderly craftsman in the village, whom the gift of a piece of land and a sum of money easily reconciled to the arrangement.

But though faultless in the worldly sense, the marriage of Piero di Ser Antonio was a childless union, and meantime Caterina's little boy Leonardo grew in strength and beauty. We do not know what became of the mother, but Leonardo was taken into the house of Ser Antonio, and grew up under the care of his grandparents, and when he was thirteen years old his father, still without other children, received him into his own house at Florence.

The boy had already shown an extraordinary precocity, and he was taken by his father to the *bottega* of Verrocchio, then one of the leading artists in Florence—a craftsman whose work ranged from the designing and working of the most delicate jewels in gold and silver, to the modelling of works in stone or bronze, and the painting of pictures.

WIZARD OF THE RENAISSANCE

Here was just the training the lad required, and evidently his general education had not been neglected. Vasari tells us that in arithmetic he soon got beyond his teacher, confounding him by the problems he propounded and the questions he asked. He played the lute divinely, extemporising music and verse.

In Verrocchio's *bottega* he made rapid progress, turning his attention to all branches of art. In 1472 he was admitted a member of the Guild of Painters. It seems, however, that his activities were so extended that he must soon have severed his connection with the *bottega*.

His methods of study differed largely from those of his contemporaries, to whom the study of the antique was the main thing. Not so with Leonardo, nature was his only master; and withal he had a curious love for strange and unusual types of beauty. When he saw a face that appealed to him he would follow its owner about from street to street, and then go home and fill a page with drawings. Human hair fascinated him strangely, and he never tired of reproducing its subtle coils.

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The grotesque, too, came in for its share of his notice. It is said that he would entertain a number of peasants, plying them with food and drink, and amusing them with song and story till the company was convulsed with laughter. Then he would disappear to record a page or two of inimitable grotesques.

Mechanical science especially seems to have fascinated him, and though no mention of it occurs in Vasari's Life, it appears from his own writings that, probably about this time, he spent some years as military engineer in the service of the Sultan of Cairo, travelling extensively in Asia Minor and Egypt.

In 1482, when he was thirty years of age, he came to Milan, the seat of the most brilliant court in Europe. Its ruler, Lodovico di Moro, arrogantly boasted that he held War in one hand and Peace in the other. That the Pope was his chaplain, the Emperor Maximilian his hired soldier, Venice his treasury, and the King of France his courier.

Vasari tells us that Leonardo had invented and made a silver lute, in the shape of a horse's head, the rich tones of which so delighted

WIZARD OF THE RENAISSANCE

Lorenzo de' Medici, that he sent it to the Duke of Milan as his gift. But though this might serve as an introduction, Leonardo had more valuable services to offer. The draft of a most amazing letter still exists in which he offers his services to Lodovico, and from the MS., notes which he has left, we can prove the truth of his pretensions in every particular.

The first nine paragraphs of the letter are taken up with the different branches of military science, the designing of engines of war, the making of bombs, preparations of siege works, the building of bridges, and various devices for use in war by sea or land. He then goes on to say,—I quote Mrs. Foster's translation,—“In time of peace I believe that I could equal any other, as regards works in architecture. I can prepare designs for buildings whether public or private and also conduct water from one place to another.

“Furthermore, I can execute works in sculpture, marble, bronze, or terra-cotta. In painting also I can do what may be done, as well as any other, be he who he may.

“I can likewise undertake the execution of

MASTER PAINTERS : DA VINCI,

the bronze horse which is a monument that will be to the perpetual glory and immortal honour of my lord your father of happy memory, and of the illustrious house of Sforza.

"And if any of the above-named things shall seem to any man to be impossible and impracticable, I am perfectly ready to make trial of them in your Excellency's park, or in whatever other place you shall be pleased to command, commanding myself to you with all possible humility."

For nearly twenty years he was a leading figure in the gay life of Milan. He was the beau-ideal of a courtier. Tall and commanding in appearance and of great physical strength, and of a grace and charm of manner which none could resist. With a black cap on his flowing yellow hair, and his rose-coloured cloak over his shoulder, he rode about the city like a young prince. His activities were many and various, designing decorations, costumes, and what not, for state festivities. At his instigation the Duke founded an Academia Leonardo da Vinci where he lectured and gave instruction.

It is thought that the voluminous MS., notes

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which he left behind him, touching on every branch of human knowledge, were notes used in these lectures.

Amid his more trivial employments in Milan the artist found time for serious work also.

The ill-fated Beatrice d'Este, the wife whom Il Moro in 1491 had wedded with such brilliant festivities, for days before her unhappy death in child-bed, had haunted the church of Santa Maria della Gracie. In one of the phases of gloomy religious feeling caused by her death Il Moro, in conjunction with the monks of Santa Maria, commissioned Leonardo to execute his great painting of the "Last Supper" there. For ten years the painter laboured on it. A pupil notes with wonder how he sometimes would paint steadily without pause for rest or food from morning till the light failed. At other times he would not touch it for days, but stand for hours before it in deep thought. Again, he would hurriedly come from the other end of Milan, mount the scaffold, add a few touches, and then go away. The monks could not understand these methods ; and the Prior, after vainly endeavouring to get the painter to

MASTER PAINTERS : DA VINCI,

work more expeditiously, complained to the Duke, who sent for Leonardo.

Although he would have nothing to say to the importunities of the Prior, to the Duke he deigned to explain the difficulties that beset him in his rendering of the subject. There were two heads he said that he still wanted. The first, that of the Saviour, he could not hope to find on earth, nor could he himself imagine it in its due perfection and beauty. The second, that of Judas, he had been unable to find so far, but failing a better, he would fall back on that of the troublesome and impertinent Prior. And so the monks were discomfited, and the picture was finished in due season.

Alas, like most of Leonardo's great works it has now all but disappeared. It was painted in oil, a medium he preferred to fresco, which required a speedy execution, and even so soon as fifty years after the damp of the wall had almost ruined it. Now it has been repainted again and again, and despite a recent more intelligent restoration it can now be only the faintest echo of its former self.

But enough remains to mark it as one of the

WIZARD OF THE RENAISSANCE

world's masterpieces, whether viewed as a dramatic composition, or as an expression of religious sentiment. The moment chosen is that when Christ turns to his disciples and says "One of you shall betray me," in an instant changing the peaceful nature of the scene into a series of agitated groups, agitated but still dominated by the calm central figure.

The other great work which he began and
took for Il Moro, the preparation of the
colossal statue of his father Francesco Sforza,
was still more unfortunate, in so far as it never
reached completion. It seems to have occu-
pied him during the whole of his stay in Milan,
a period of nearly twenty years, and numerous
sketches for it exist. In some the horse is rear-
ing and trampling on a fallen enemy, in others
the pose is quieter, more in the style of the
"Gattamelata" of Donatello.

Finally it reached the length of a full-sized
model, which was exhibited in 1493 amidst uni-
versal acclamations, but for some reason the
casting in bronze was never carried out. It is
said that the technical difficulties were insur-
mountable, and Michael Angelo afterwards

MASTER PAINTERS : DA VINCI,

cast it in the artist's teeth that he had been unable to complete his work, but from a letter of Leonardo's it seems likely that in the impending dissolution of his fortunes the Duke lacked the funds for the work. The model survived for a while, the Gascon bowmen used it as a target for their shafts, but it soon disappeared, and the world lost what would assuredly have been the third great equestrian statue of the Renaissance, a worthy successor to the "Gattamelata" of Donatello and the "Colleoni" of Verrocchio.

In 1500, only three years after the completion of the "Last Supper," the Duchy of Milan was conquered by Louis XII. and the Duke of Milan was confined a prisoner in the Castle of Loches.

After the fall of Milan came a change in the painter's fortunes, and from then to the end of his life he led a wandering existence, changing from patron to patron, seldom staying long in one place. But his ceaseless industry never failed.

In 1502 he was in Florence engaged on the third great work of his life. He and Michael

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Angelo were chosen to paint on opposite walls of the Sala del Consiglio of the Palazzo della Signoria, a battle scene. Michael Angelo chose as his subject an incident of the Pisan troops surprised while bathing, while Leonardo took an incident in the war between Florentines and Milanese, a conflict at Anghiari, the central feature of the composition being the fight for the standard.

The cartoons were exhibited together and were hailed by all as the most masterly productions of contemporary art. "As long as the two existed," said Cellini, "they were the school of the world." In the eyes of many, Michael Angelo's brilliant revelation of the possibilities of the nude, not the classic repose of the Greek, but the nude in violent action, bore the palm; but Leonardo's composition must have been a wonderful representation of the fiercest human passions.

Both cartoons have disappeared, alas!—Leonardo's we only know from descriptions and a few sketches and engravings. Rubens copied the central group, but we know what liberties he took with his copies. We can best get an

MASTER PAINTERS : DA VINCI,

idea of its qualities from the sketches in the master's own notebook, and his wonderful description of how a battlefield should be represented :—“ The smoke haze mingling with the heavier dust clouds, the air full of arrows, the figures in the foreground covered with dust in their hair and eyebrows. The conquerors running with hair streaming in the wind and brows bent down. A horse dragging its dead rider and leaving a track in the dust. Make the dead half buried in the dust (changing into crimson mud), the blood flowing in a sinuous stream from the body. Show others in the death-agony grinding their teeth and rolling their eyes. . . . A riderless horse charging among the enemy, scattering them with its heels. The squadrons of the reserves standing ready and alert, with eyes shaded by their hands, peering through the dust clouds, . . . no level spot of ground that is not trampled over with blood.” We can almost see the scene in its horror and brutality.

Leonardo began to carry out the cartoon, but fresco did not suit his style of working, the oil medium used in the “ Last Supper ” had

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not been successful, and his restless mind turning to new experiments, it is said that he tried to revive the encaustic method of painting practised by the ancients, where by the application of heat the colour was caused to penetrate the surface. But, alas, when fires were kindled in front of the picture the colours melted and ran, and the work of months was ruined. Like many another magnificent project of the artist's the picture was never completed.

And so his restless life goes on, now working as military engineer for Cesare Borgia, for whom he travelled through the whole of Central Italy, inspecting fortifications, now acting as Court painter to Louis XII. In 1513 he set out for Rome.

In 1515, on the death of the French king, he was attached to the household of his successor and bade farewell to Italy. Perhaps advancing years made him value the advantages of a powerful patron, in a country with a more stable political atmosphere than that of his native land. For though Bellini, Michael Angelo, and Titian lived to a great age, it was

MASTER PAINTERS : DA VINCI,

not to be so with him. Intense thought and unceasing toil in every department of human activity had multiplied his years. In the portrait sketch at Windsor, from his own hand, the head is that of a patriarch, the brow furrowed with lines of thought and care, the noble form bent and leaning on a staff. His time was indeed drawing to a close. His right hand was paralysed, but he still directed his pupils and assistants, and still carried on his ceaseless activities as architect and engineer.

His home was the Château Cloux, near the royal residence of Amboise, and his salary amounted to what was then the princely sum of 700 crowns (about £1400). Only a few miles off was the Castle of Loches, where, after a tedious imprisonment, his old patron Lodovico Sforza had died some years before. Here in the sixty-seventh year of his age he died—the greatest man of his age.

As with Shakespeare so with Leonardo da Vinci, the man appears hidden under the multiplicity of his work. Of the man himself we know little. We never hear that the idol of a city ever had a love affair. Was it only beauty

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in the abstract that haunted him? Was this singer of sweet songs, the marvellous improviser to the lute, as cold as stone? Were his impassioned love songs written only to mock the ears to which they were addressed? Yet his sketch-books are full of the heads of women.

The soul of Leonardo is wrapped in mystery. When in Florence after the fall of Milan, he painted the portrait of Mona Lisa, the wife of Francesco del Giacondo. Here he seems to have incorporated all that he felt of female beauty, and in that baffling half smile he shrouds his secret.

It is said that he lingered over the work for four years, that he kept mimes and musicians employed to call up the faint evanescent expression. It may be so, but the picture is much more than a mere portrait. Walter Pater, in a passage of unequalled beauty, has gone far to translate the untranslatable, and to convey in English prose the quality of its message.

Before the "Mona Lisa" we cease to regret the loss of the "Battle of the Standard," and the Equestrian Statue of Sforza, even the destruction of the "Last Supper." Here we feel

MASTER PAINTERS : DA VINCI

that one side at least of the marvellous and many-sided mind has reached complete expression.

CHAPTER FOUR

MICHAEL ANGELO. THE TRAGEDY OF HIS LIFE











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CHAPTER FOUR MICHAEL ANGELO:THE TRAGEDY OF HIS LIFE

IT IS STRANGE THAT THE LIVES OF the two most striking figures of the Renaissance should be a record of unfinished work. In Leonardo da Vinci's case, this was due to the multiplicity of his interests, for to carry out fully only one branch of his activities would have been a work of a lifetime. Michael Angelo on the other hand found his vocation as a boy, and pursued his aim with singleness of purpose. But alas, fate decreed that his best laid plans should be wasted by the caprice of his patrons. This is the greatest tragedy of an artist's life, recurring again and again throughout the history of art—the artist unable to realise his visions, not from inability, but because his hands are tied.

And so it comes that the greatest sculptor of modern times is represented only by a few fragments. The conceptions arose in his brain complete, his powers were ample to embody them in stone, a tithe of the time he was forced to waste on uncongenial labour would have sufficed for their completion. But no, a sculp-

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tor, he must lay aside mallet and chisel and use brush instead ; a patriot and republican, he must depend on the patronage of the oppressors of his country for a livelihood.

Leonardo's genius seems that of a mighty river overflowing its banks, and spreading itself wider and wider till it is all but lost in a network of lagoons. Michael Angelo's is a deep torrent, violently turned from its course ; his powers are turned to baser uses, like Niagara set to drive a mill.

And so with all his greatness he is a tragic figure. A tower of integrity in a corrupt age ; a deep thinker and a prophet amid the most frivolous and worldly surroundings.

He was born on the 6th March 1475 at Caprese, his father, Lodovico Buonaroti Simoni, a well-to-do Florentine, being at that time Podesta, or Governor, of the district. Shortly afterwards, on the expiring of his term of office, Lodovico retired to his family home at Settignano, a little village among the hills near Florence. There were valuable quarries in the neighbourhood, the air was full of the sound of mallet and chisel, for nearly all the inhabitants

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were stonemasons or workers in marble. The baby boy's nurse was a stonemason's daughter, and a stonemason's wife, and he used afterwards to say that he had drawn in the love of his craft with his nurse's milk.

He was sent to a good grammar school in Florence by his father, a worthy but rather narrow-minded man, who thrashed him severely when he found that much of his time was spent in the *bottegas* of the Florentine craftsmen.

However, the boy's bent was too pronounced to be ignored, and doubtless even in those early days he showed something of the iron will that marked him as a man.

In 1488, at the age of thirteen, he was apprenticed to Domenico Ghirlandajo, one of the leading painters of the day. It marks at once the boy's artistic and the father's business capacity, that instead of his paying a premium as was usual, the agreement was that the boy should receive a payment of twenty-four florins during his three years' apprenticeship; six during the first year, eight during the second, and ten during the third. Soon his ex-

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traordinary abilities were the wonder of the whole workshop. He even dared to take a cartoon, from one of the master's drawings, and with a broader pen go over it afresh, awaking the figure to life with his magic strokes, thus early in his career showing that almost brutal frankness, and disregard for the feelings of others in all matters of art, which afterwards distinguished him.

In every workshop there were drawings and designs by the older masters, stained and dirty, which were used as stock patterns. These the boy would copy with such scrupulous fidelity, staining even the paper to look like the worn original, that he was able to substitute the copy and obtain for himself the original drawing. We should be rather inclined to give a harsh name to such a practice now, but in those days the drawings were not looked on as of any artistic value. It is characteristic that so early Michael Angelo should appreciate the truth he uttered years later when, as recorded by Francisco d'Ollando, he said, "if a capable man merely makes a simple outline, like a person about to begin something, he will at once be known

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by it,—if Apelles, as Apelles; if an ignorant painter, as an ignorant painter. And there is no necessity for more, neither more time, nor more experience, nor examination, for eyes which understand it."

Soon he found an environment more suited to his genius. Lorenzo de' Medici, "Il Magnifico," as he was called, had filled the garden of the Medici with relics of ancient art. He had placed in charge there Bartoldo, who in his younger days had acted as assistant to the great Donatello, and his wish was to make a school which would revive the former glories of Florentine sculpture. With this desire he went to Ghirlandajo, asking him to send there any of his pupils he judged suitable, and among those selected was the youthful Michael Angelo.

Vasari relates that after having spent some time merely in dressing stone and other rough work, the boy begged a piece of marble from the workmen, and boldly set to work to copy in it the head of an antique faun. Lorenzo, passing by, remarked the open mouth of the faun, and said with a smile that in so old a head the

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teeth would not be complete. When he returned a short time after he found that Michael Angelo had struck out one of the teeth, hollowing the gum to make it appear to have dropped out naturally.

Struck with the boy's ability, he asked his name. "Go," said he, "and tell your father that I wish to speak to him."

But the honest Lodovico was far from overjoyed to get the message. He swore lustily that no son of his should be a stonemason, and it was only in the presence of the great man himself that he professed with due humility that "not Michael Angelo alone, but all of us with our lives and liberties are at the pleasure of your Magnificence."

The boy was taken into the house of Lorenzo, where he was treated like a son. A regular allowance was given to him. He sat at table with the Duke's own family, amid the most cultured society of Italy, men like Ficino, the translator of Plato, Pico della Mirandola, who sought to reconcile in one philosophy the myths of ancient Greece and the faith of Christianity, and Angelo Poliziano, unrivalled both as

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scholar and poet, and who acted as tutor to the children of the Medici. It was a worthy Academy for Italy's greatest sculptor.

Here, on the suggestion of Poliziano, it is said, he produced the first of his authentic works, still preserved in the Casa Buonarroti at Florence, a bas-relief of "Centaurs and Lapiths." In this group of struggling forms, grandiose in conception, violent and convulsive in action, the artist foreshadows his future career. In the words of Symonds : "The horoscope of the mightiest Florentine genius was already cast." Another incident of his life at that time we may note. Along with other lads he was drawing in the Brancacci Chapel from Masaccio's frescoes there. Criticism in such cases was always free, and Michael Angelo's was apt to be expressed with more directness than courtesy. A burly fellow, Piero Torrigiano, angered by his remarks, struck him a blow in the face, so violent that it felled him to the ground, breaking the bridge of his nose, a disfigurement which marked him for life.

Florence then was at its gayest. Lorenzo the Magnificent organised gorgeous festivities to

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amuse the people, the first artists and craftsmen of the day designing the costumes and decorations. With his own hand he wrote verses to be sung by the Florentine maidens. Poliziano also, whose learning filled Florence with students and scholars, gladly turned his pen to those lighter uses. Far into the night the revels continued, processions of gaily clad horsemen, followed by hundreds of citizens on foot bearing torches, filled the streets, singing to the sound of many sweet instruments.

But above the music another and a solemn note was heard, the voice of Savonarola raised in the great Duomo, when even the shorthand writer who has recorded for us his sermons, leaves broken gaps with the words "Here I could not continue for weeping," and Pico della Mirandola tells us that the words of the preacher fell "like the clap of doom."

These three years spent in the house of the Medici were the most fruitful part of the artist's training. They came to an end with the death of Lorenzo in 1492. His son and successor Piero was a rude and boorish youth, and the select circle of scholars and artists that had

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gathered round "Il Magnifico" melted away. So ended Michael Angelo's student days. Henceforth he fought his own battle.

After a year spent in Bologna he returned to Florence, executing various commissions. The next landmark in his life is his visit to Rome in 1496 at the age of twenty-one.

Here for a time he had to struggle hard enough to keep his head above water, but after a time he made the acquaintance of a Roman banker Jacopo Gallo, who was of great assistance to him. Not only did he commission two works himself, a Bacchus and a Cupid, but he was instrumental in obtaining for the sculptor a still more important work, a *Pieta* for the Cardinal di San Dionigi. So sure was the worthy banker of his protégé that he did not scruple to give a written guarantee to the Cardinal that the work "shall be the finest work in marble which Rome to-day can show, and that no master of our days shall be able to produce a better."

His confidence was justified, for though one of the earliest works of his manhood, it still remains one of the most beautiful, and certainly

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the most tender, of all the master's creations.

Dating also from about this time is the marble group of the Madonna and Child in the church of St. Bavon in Bruges.

During these years in Rome, the affairs of his family in Florence had caused him much anxiety. His father, Lodovico, had lost his small post at the Customs with the fall of the Medici and was in straitened circumstances, his three younger brothers were growing up and required to be provided for. In these circumstances it was to the elder brother that the family turned, and it is wonderful to see how readily this man, set down as taciturn and morose by his fellows, responded. The relations between him and his worthy father especially seem to have been always cordial and affectionate, evidently based on a mutual respect as well as affection.

Indeed it is to be feared that in those days the sculptor stinted himself to provide for his family. His biographer, Condivi, whose life of the sculptor is translated in full by Sir Charles Holroyd in his able volume on Michael Angelo, quotes some most interesting

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letters on the subject. The younger brother, Buonarotto, has evidently just paid a visit to Rome, and on his return his father writes with genuine distress and with sound good sense beseeching him not to injure his health by ill-judged severities, telling him that "economy is good but penuriousness is evil, for it is a vice displeasing to God and man, and moreover it is bad for the body and soul. Whilst you are young you will be able to bear these hardships for a time but when the strength of youth fails you, disease and infirmities will develop, for they are engendered by hardship, mean living, and penurious habits." He then adds the following quaint but earnest advice : " Above all things have a care of your head, keep it moderately warm and never wash ; have yourself rubbed down, but never wash."

The relations between the brothers were not so cordial, but Michael Angelo treated them generously, setting up the two elder in a cloth business in Florence.

It was probably at this time that the sculptor laid the foundation of those habits which he maintained throughout life. When he was old

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he told Condigi that though rich he had always lived as a poor man. Even when there was no necessity for it, he seems to have had an entire distaste for luxury, even of ordinary comfort. He ate sparingly, a piece of bread taken while he worked was sufficient ; he slept little. When his brother wished to visit him in Bologna, he wrote telling him not to come, as he had only one wretched room, in which he and his three workmen shared the same bed.

When in full health he slept in his clothes, even to his big boots, and his leather hose he wore so long that when he took them off often the skin came with them.

A strange rough figure he seems in the midst of the polished luxury of the age.

This absolute indifference to all the pomp and gaieties of life was reflected in his work, which was stern even to bareness. Gorgeous colour and rich apparel did not appeal to him, he had no feeling for the beauties of landscape, the world of beauty for him was entirely sculptur-esque, the human form and that alone dominated his mind.

In 1501 we find him back in Florence and

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in that year he began the colossal statue of "David," perhaps the best known of all his works.

The genesis of the statue is interesting. In the workshop of the Cathedral was a huge block of marble over thirteen feet in height, which about a hundred years before had been begun by Agostino di Duccio.

The figure had been roughly blocked out and then for some reason the work abandoned. Michael Angelo was consulted, and on his undertaking to hew a statue out of the damaged block, a contract was drawn up, and he set to work. Within the two years the work was completed. A committee of artists, including Leonardo da Vinci, Sandro Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, Piero di Cosimo, and others less famous, met to consider where the statue should be placed, and after considerable discussion they agreed to leave the choice to the sculptor himself.

It took four days to move the colossus and another fortnight to set it in position, but on the 8th of June 1504 it stood on the steps of the Palazzo Vecchio on the site formerly occu-

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pied by Donatello's "Judith." For over three hundred years it stood there, but recently, to protect it from the weather, it was removed to the Academy where it now stands.

The master's fame was immediate and he at once took his place as the foremost sculptor of Italy. In the "David" for the first time appears the quality—the *terribilita*, dominating, awe-inspiring—which was to become the distinguishing mark of his work. Here we have a master full fledged, who challenges the masters of antiquity, with a technical power as assured as their own, but whose work is burdened with a weight and spiritual significance beyond their experience. It is an heroic form, not the Grecian youth of the Parthenon nor yet the boy David of Donatello, but, with his knotted brows and the intense energy of the pose, an agent of the wrath of God.

Some twenty years after, in 1527, Vasari tells how the left arm of the statue was broken by a stone, thrown from a window, and how he himself with the aid of a few friends secured the pieces. The arm was eventually repaired—the broken pieces being replaced—in 1543.

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We now come to one of the central events of the sculptor's life. In August 1504 he was commissioned to prepare a cartoon for the decoration of one wall of the Sala del Gran Consiglio in the Palazzo della Signoria, the decoration of the opposite wall being entrusted to Leonardo da Vinci. We have already discussed Leonardo's design. That of his rival was chosen to exhibit his command over the nude. The incident represented was the surprise of the Florentine soldiers in 1364, while bathing in the Arno, by Sir John Hawkwood and his English cavalry (then in the employment of the Pisans). Naturally the incident partook rather of the nature of a competition, for the rivalry between the two great masters was keen.

Michael Angelo's composition, crowded with naked figures in every pose of violent action, full of daring foreshortening, was an exhibition of unrivalled power in the handling of the nude. It was received with universal acclamation. Benvenuto Cellini hails it as the supreme masterpiece of the artist, which even in later years he never equalled. Certain it

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is, at any rate, that the drawing constitutes a landmark in Italian art.

It was a landmark also in Michael Angelo's life. Hitherto all had been a steady growth and progress. Each commission was more important than the preceding. Each work exhibited more and more power. The artist had now reached full maturity, but with the next step begins the tragedy of his career. In the beginning of 1505, he was sent for by Pope Julius II. We may guess that some hint of the projected monument was given in the message, and always a sculptor rather than a painter, Michael Angelo left the cartoon unexecuted, and set out for Rome. From this time he was the slave of the Popes. Doubtless the wealth and power of his patrons seemed to him to promise unlimited freedom of opportunity, but in reality he was bound, like the slaves he carved for the tomb of Julius.

The new Pope Julius II. was a patron of quite a different type from Lorenzo "Il Magnifico"; of little culture or learning he was more fitted for a soldier than a prelate : he was a born leader of men, but there was much in his temperament

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and character to recommend him to Michael Angelo. In many respects the two men were strangely alike. Both of iron will, impetuous and headstrong; both ambitious and with a vision for comprehending great designs, greater even than their power to execute.

The sculptor had not been long in Rome when he was asked by Julius to plan for him a tomb to be placed in St. Peter's. The scheme which rose in the brain of Michael Angelo was a colossal one. Only a rough sketch of the monument in its entirety remains, but it was a vast combination of architecture and sculpture, comprising not less than about forty more than life-sized figures. The Pope approved of the design, and within a month or two of his leaving Florence the sculptor was in the quarries of Carrara, accompanied only by two workmen, selecting the marble for the work. Here for eight months he wrought, and in the intervals of his labour, an enterprise grandiose and even fantastic suggested itself to him. He had an idea of carving a huge cliff jutting into the sea into a gigantic monument, a thought worthy of the man.

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Soon the marble was in his workshop in Rome to the delight of Julius, who had a private bridge thrown over from his own rooms to the artist's quarters, that he might visit him at his work. One great scheme begat another, and to give a worthy housing to the monument, the Pope conceived the idea of rebuilding St. Peter's on a grander scale.

Rapidly the work progressed. Soon one great statue, the figure of Moses the law-giver, was complete, and two others—the figures of bound captives which were to stand at intervals round the tomb—almost so, when unaccountably the Pope changed his mind. Several times in succession on the sculptor calling to receive the funds required for the work, for Julius was his own paymaster, he was refused admission. After the last rebuff his haughty temper rose, and mounting his horse and telling his servants to sell his effects in Rome and follow him with the proceeds, he set off for Florence. Courier after courier followed him from the Pope but the irate sculptor paid no heed, and soon was in his native town. Here he stayed for a time, but

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at last the Pope's letters to the Gonfalonier of Florence demanding his return became so insistent, that Michael Angelo was told that the city could hardly go to war with the Pope on his account and that he had better return. Meantime Julius, on one of his many campaigns, had entered Bologna, and it was here that Michael Angelo rejoined him. Condivi relates how Julius made a scapegoat of the unlucky prelate who introduced and tried to excuse the sculptor, and venting his wrath on him, received Michael Angelo with complaisance. In Bologna he was commissioned to erect a huge statue of the Pope in bronze, which only a few years afterwards was thrown down by the populace, and the metal cast into a gun, which the mocking Italians called "La Giulia."

In 1508 we see Michael Angelo back again in Rome ready to resume work on the monument. But a second and more serious interruption was at hand.

The Pope had conceived another great undertaking, the painting of the vault of the Sistine Chapel, and ordered him to carry out the work. In vain he endeavoured to excuse himself, say-

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ing he was a sculptor and not a painter, and suggesting that the commission should be given to Raphael, then the Pope's chief painter, but Julius was firm.

So wearily mallet and chisel were laid aside and he turned to his new task. The difficulties were immense. The scaffolding erected for him by Bramante, who bore him no love, was unsuitable, so he designed a new system of scaffolding for himself. The assistants he had engaged from Florence to help him in the fresco painting failed to satisfy him, and he contemptuously locked the doors on them, and let them return home. Once really started the immensity of the undertaking seems to have fired his imagination, and single-handed he worked with furious and sustained energy. In eighteen months the first part of the stupendous work was completed, the scaffolding taken down, and all Rome flocked to see.

The result was a triumph to the painter and marks a new era in Italian art.

Even Raphael, after seeing the frescoes, modified his own style to something of the grandeur and boldness of his rival.

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The whole was painted by October 1512, the old Pope, impatient, and fearing that he would not see the completion of the work, climbing the scaffold and urging on the painter.

The vault of the Sistine Chapel is a work unique in Italian art—it is sculpture in paint. But while we may feel that the artist has been forced to reproduce his conceptions in the wrong medium, that those magnificent Sybils and prophets, and the superb youthful figures between the central panels, were conceived in stone and not in paint, yet we must recognise that here and here alone in all his work has Michael Angelo been able to carry out his plan in its full grandeur. One may excuse even the change of medium, for to produce such a series in stone, as we have on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, would be beyond the powers of any man. Here we have the genius of Michael Angelo expressed at its fullest and best—the human form and that alone,—but a grander and more glorious form, the form not of man but of superman is the language of its expression. Here indeed, and not in the uncompleted tomb of Julius, is the Parthenon of Michael Angelo.

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On the death of Julius in 1513, the completion of the tomb on the vast scale originally intended became impossible. In vain the sculptor endeavoured to carry out the work ; the new Pope had tasks of his own. For forty years it dragged on, finally to be set up in a miserably abbreviated form in the church of San Pietro, with little more of Michael Angelo's work on it than the Moses executed in the first few months.

Leo x., succeeding Julius, decreed that the sculptor should turn architect and several years' labour were wasted on the façade of San Lorenzo—but on his death Giulio de' Medici, with whom Michael Angelo had sat at the table of Lorenzo the Magnificent, ascended the papal throne as Clement VII.

And now a new task was given to the sculptor—to build the Sacristy of San Lorenzo in Florence, and adorn there the tombs of the Medici family. It was bitterly distasteful, for though Michael Angelo the artist was bound by ties of gratitude to the great Lorenzo, to Michael Angelo the patriot the house of the Medici was the enemy of his beloved Florence.

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But in the tombs of Giuliano the Duke of Nemours, and Lorenzo the Duke of Urbino, is found some of the finest of his work. When engaged on a great work the sculptor seems easily to forget the meanness of the object it commemorates.

In the brooding figure on Lorenzo's tomb, we pass from the personal to the impersonal, it is not the Medici but the Prince who is personified, and in the two pairs of nude figures above each sarcophagus, Night and Day, Twilight and Dawn, all the mystery of human life, all the weariness of its endeavour, is expressed.

For nearly twelve years he worked on the tombs, till on the death of Clement VII., in 1534, he threw down his tools and left Florence for ever.

He was now sixty years of age, and a life of hardship and ceaseless energy had left their marks. His father and his favourite brother Buonarotto were dead, and as years roll on he seems to grow more and more taciturn and morose.

The new Pope, Paul III., appointed him in 1535 chief architect, sculptor and painter to

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the Vatican, for his rivals had all passed away. Leonardo da Vinci, his rival in Florence, had died in 1519; Raphael, his rival in Rome, in 1520; Perugino died in 1523, Andrea del Sarto in 1531, Correggio in 1534. The new Venetian school indeed was bursting forth into its full glory, but in Rome his supremacy was now unchallenged.

His next great work was the painting of the great fresco of the "Last Judgment" on the end wall of the Sistine Chapel, begun about 1534, and completed in 1541. Time and the restorers have dealt more hardly with these frescoes than with those of the ceiling, indeed during the painter's lifetime Paul IV. set an inferior artist to add draperies to the nude figures, an employment which caused the painter to be known ever after as the "breeches maker." But powerful and dignified as it is, this sombre work has never rivalled the earlier masterpiece of his prime.

It was now in his old age that romance touches slightly the life of Michael Angelo, in his devoted friendship with Vittoria Colonna. Of illustrious birth she was betrothed at four years

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to the Marquis of Pescara, and married when she was nineteen. On her husband's death in 1525, she consecrated herself to religion; living in semi-monastic seclusion in Rome. Cultured and learned, she took a great interest in the affairs of the Church, some of her friends were branded as heretics, and to have her acquaintance was to be regarded with some suspicion by the orthodox.

With the Marchioness Michael Angelo had much in common, in religion, in literary tastes, and in art. For she was a graceful writer of Italian verse, and she and the aged sculptor used to exchange sonnets. The Portuguese, Francisco d'Ollando, in his interesting dialogues, reproduces the conversation on matters of ethics and art, at the select parties which met at the great lady's house.

One more great work remained for Michael Angelo to perform during his old age, the completion of the great church of St. Peter's, projected by his old patron Julius II. Since its inception the building had passed through many hands. Bramante had drawn out the first plan, and had started the work. When

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he died in 1514, or perhaps even before then, Raphael was appointed chief architect, but beyond departing from his predecessor's plan and substituting one of his own, he did little to further the work. Later still, Antonio da Sangallo continued the building and was in charge of affairs for some thirty years, during which the building all but stood still.

A nest of corruption had sprung up round it ; officials, contractors, foremen, each one had his finger in the pie ; but when, in 1546, Michael Angelo was appointed chief architect matters took a change.

In the first place he refused to accept any salary for the work, dedicating his last remaining years of life to it, and his own position being thus beyond suspicion he set himself with all his old vigour, and doubtless with much of his old harshness, to clean out the Augean stables. He did not mince matters, no inferior material was allowed to pass "even if it came from heaven." The committee appointed to supervise the work he contemptuously ignored and shut out of the building, so that in 1560 they complained bitterly that for thirteen years they

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had seen neither plans nor work. He made enemies at every turn, but the work progressed steadily.

The great feature of the building as it rose under the hands of Michael Angelo was the immense dome, simple and austere in design, perfect in proportions, one of the noblest works of architecture in the world.

Some years before his death, his friends persuaded him to make a model of the cupola, which he did, so that though he only saw it carried to the drum where the actual cupola begins, yet the whole was carried out according to his design.

In the rest of the building, unfortunately, his design was departed from and a long nave added, the great portico at the end of which cuts off the near view of the dome, but as one gets farther and farther away the great mass rises up against the sky, dominating not only St. Peter's but Rome itself, a worthy memorial of Italy's greatest sculptor.

He died in 1564, almost ninety years of age, in harness right to the very end.



CHAPTER FIVE

GIORGIONE AND THE VENETIAN SCHOOL



CHAPTER FIVE GIORGIONE AND THE VENETIAN SCHOOL

IN THE CLUSTER OF GREAT STARS AT the beginning of the sixteenth century, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Correggio, and Michael Angelo, the light of the Renaissance reached its fullest splendour. The after history of painting in Italy is the story of its decline. Yet ere the light died down there came from the north one more burst of splendour, rich in all the gorgeous hues of the sunset. For it was in those later days that the Venetian school evolved an art full of richness and glory, a worthy climax to all that had gone before.

Venice had hitherto played little part in the art history of the peninsula. Engrossed in commercial enterprises, her citizens had taken little interest in the great intellectual and æsthetic movement of which Florence was the centre. Venice can show nothing to rival the brilliant coterie of artists and scholars which distinguished the Tuscan city throughout the fifteenth century, and make those days of growth, when every change was a leap forward, perhaps the most fascinating of all to the student.

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The triumphs of Venice were to be found in a more mundane sphere. In wealth she led the way. Here was the gateway through which the treasures of the East poured into Europe. Numberless galleys crowded together at the quays and the great warehouses were filled to overflowing. Queen of the Adriatic, her fleet dominated the Mediterranean, and at home, protected by the waters from foreign invasion, the community enjoyed unexampled prosperity.

It was in this atmosphere, not of culture and refinement, not of intellect and scholarship, but rather of a bourgeois opulence, that the great school of Venetian painting arose.

But besides the material background of wealth, there was another element of equal importance. Venice always has been the most beautiful of cities. Writers have compared her glorious colour with the tints of a shell, where on a background of white glow all the hues of the rainbow. With no woods or hills to shut off the view, the great expanse of heaven, from sunrise to sunset, shows every day its gorgeous pageant, duplicated in the

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waters of the canals and lagoons. The great warehouses that rise by the sides of the canals are palaces, built in rich coloured stone, fretted with rich and curious architecture. Many great artists have painted her, from Canale to Turner, from Turner to Whistler and Sargent, each draws fresh draughts of beauty from her limitless supply.

And so it is natural that the art arising in such a city should display a new susceptibility to natural beauty, a new delight in the gorgeous panorama of earth and sea and sky.

Venetian art, then, is distinguished not like the earlier Tuscan or Umbrian schools, for naïve piety struggling into the most delicate beauty of expression, or like the later schools, by efforts to revive again the glories of classic art. Spiritually and intellectually it is on a lower level. It starts from a more worldly standpoint. With Whitman it seems to say, "The world, that is enough for me, I do not wish the constellations any nearer." And the great heritage of Venetian art constitutes an apotheosis of worldly splendour.

After all, art in its essence is neither spiritual

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nor intellectual, but sensuous, and in its direct and fearless appeal to the senses, Venetian art points out the path along which the art of painting was still to progress when the marvellous art of Italy had died away.

Form was the preoccupation of the Tuscan artists, to them colour was an afterthought. Their great men were masters of expression like Leonardo, masters of line like Raphael, masters of form like Michael Angelo. But colour as an end in itself, colour in its fullest and richest harmonies, was the discovery of the Venetians. Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto were colourists first and last, their works the most sumptuous of decorations.

But if this were all, Venetian art would still lack its deepest and most haunting charm. In the work of the later painters of the school there is something more subtle, more illusive, an aroma like the fragrance of flowers ; a lyric strain running through it like a chord of music. This haunting quality is the outcome of the personality of one man, Giorgione.

We know almost nothing of him. He died young, and left little behind him in finished

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work. To-day there are hardly six pictures one may surely say are from his hand. In those six panels is concentrated the essence of Venetian art, with all its sensuous charm. But his personality speaks to us in the work of other men. Not a contemporary but was touched to emulation. And so the spirit of Giorgione is like a thread of gold running through Venetian art.

Giorgione, ("Big George"), seems to have been born at Castelfranco, on the mainland, some twenty miles to the north of Venice. A legend has been woven round his name that he was the natural son of a member of the great Barbarelli family, but there seems to be no foundation for it, though the name Barbarelli still clings to the painter. Rather the story seems the invention of a later chronicler, as in earlier documents the name Barbarelli never occurs, but "Zorzon de Castelfrancho," "Zorzi da Castelfranco," or the like.

He seems to have come early to Venice, and to have entered the *bottega* of the Bellinis. For the Bellinis, father and two sons, Jacopo, Gentile, and Giovanni, were the most promin-

MASTER PAINTERS : GIORGIONE,

ent Venetian artists of the day. In Giovanni particularly the genius of the family centred, and we may regard him as the forerunner of the great painters of the Venetian school.

A little before this time Antonello da Messina had introduced oil painting to Venice, and under the lead of Giovanni Bellini, Venetian artists were gradually adopting the new method.

In the *bottega* of the Bellinis Giorgione had as fellow-pupils the most brilliant young men of the day — Palma Vecchio, Sebastiano del Piombo, and most important of all, the youthful Titian. The relation between Giorgione and Titian was specially close, and when the former left the *bottega* and started for himself Titian followed him as his pupil and future partner.

For a number of years the two worked in conjunction, and on Giorgione's death a number of his unfinished works were completed by Titian. So completely did the latter, in his early work, adopt the Giorgionesque spirit and technique, that the task of assigning each his share is not yet complete.

Among the most famous of the earlier works

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of Giorgione, when the influence of his master Giovanni Bellini may still be traced, is the beautiful altarpiece at Castelfranco.

High up on a raised throne sits the Madonna, with downcast eyes. At the foot of the throne on each side stands a saint; on the left, St. Liberale, in armour; on the right, St. Francis: their eyes are cast down too, and a solemn stillness broods over everything. Behind the throne stretches an open landscape bathed in floods of warm mellow light.

In the Prado, Madrid, there is another small picture of the Madonna and Child, simpler in form and of even more exquisite charm. Here again the figures cast their eyes on the ground. In 1504 the Fondaco de Tedeschi, the Exchange of the German merchants, was burnt down, and, on its being rebuilt, Giorgione was commissioned to decorate the façade with frescoes. Alas, the salt air of the lagoons has utterly destroyed the work, which was perishing even when Vasari saw it in 1541. Vasari praises it highly, but confesses that neither he nor any one else can tell what the compositions represent. Here we have an indication that al-

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ready in choice of subject Giorgione was leaving the beaten track ; for indeed he was a wayward spirit, one of those who originate rather than follow. It is said that he was greatly influenced by the work of Leonardo da Vinci, who visited Venice in 1500, and we may well believe that the secrets of chiaroscuro revealed by the great master affected the young man strongly. But after all, his chief teacher was Nature.

Tradition paints him as a tall and handsome youth, a skilled musician, playing and singing to the lute, and a welcome figure in the highest circles of the gay Venetian society. He is said to have found a patron in Caterina Cornaro, the ex-queen of Cyprus, at whose Court at Asolo, near Castelfranco, he may have taken part in those marriage festivities of which Pietro Bembo writes, when grand signors and high-born ladies debate gravely in stately dialogue on the theme of love.

In this society then we may picture him, dressed in the gay costume of old Venice, like a butterfly flitting from flower to flower, and yet never without the poet's haunting sadness of soul. And so it comes that he paints few

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religious pictures. He was the originator of a new theme in art. He pictures for us half pastorals, half court scenes, with groups of gaily dressed youths and scantily draped nymphs, seated in golden meadows, listening to the strains of music. The landscape assumes a new importance ; equally with the figures it plays its part in the emotional appeal of the picture. Nature tunes her mood to the sound of a lute, and over all there seems to lie a tranced hush.

In the "Fête Champêtre" at the Louvre, whether by the hand of Giorgione (as I believe) or merely from the brush of a follower (as some critics say), we have in its full measure this strange intoxicating spell. To find its parallel we must turn to the sister art of poetry where we recognise it in the lines of Keats. "Heard melodies are sweet," he sings, "therefore ye soft pipes, play on. . . . Fair youth beneath the trees thou canst not leave thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare."

It is the same exquisite languor, the same sense of beauty weighing so heavily that we are on the brink of tears : but on the canvas of

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Giorgione the silver melody of Keats is transmuted to gold.

Three or four of these magic little canvases remain. There is one in the Pallazzo Giovanelli, Venice, said to represent the old classic myth of Adrastus and Hypsipyle. But the title matters little. At one side of the picture a woman, nearly nude, suckles her babe ; at the other stands a Venetian youth with a staff or spear over his shoulder. Behind is a wooded landscape, from which rise the towers of a castle, while in the sky above the lightning flashes across a lowering cloud. A strange enigmatic little picture, that lingers hauntingly in the memory.

In the Imperial Gallery, Vienna, again, is a picture said by a German critic to represent Æneas, Evander, and Pallas, but better described by the more homely title of "The Three Sages." Here, curiously, the artist reproduces almost exactly, both in form and sentiment, a favourite theme of the old Chinese and Japanese artists, the meeting of sages or philosophers by the side of a mountain stream ; the figures giving an added dignity to the com-

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position, but the emotional note being struck by the romantic beauty of the scene.

It is a new departure in European art, and opens up fresh fields of delight, to be explored at a later date so lovingly by Watteau and his school, and in a slightly different form by Vermeer and the Dutch genre painters.

But the short life of the artist was nearly over. He had fallen deeply in love with a fair Venetian lady we are told. His passion was returned, and for a while they lived in an enchanted world, such a world as he has painted for us. But in 1510 the plague, that terrible scourge of the times, swept over Venice. The lady was stricken down, but ere she knew had given the fatal disease to her lover. When the pestilence passed and rich people returned to the homes from which they had fled, they found that 20,000 people had perished, and among them Giorgione.

So at the early age of thirty-three passed away one of the most brilliant and original of Italian painters, having in his short life revealed a new world of beauty to the eyes of men.



CHAPTER SIX

**ALBERT DÜRER, THE MASTER OF
NÜRNBERG**



CHAPTER SIX ALBERT DÜRER, THE MASTER OF NÜRNBERG

BUT THOUGH UNDER THE SUNNY SKIES of Italy blossomed the first flowers of Renaissance art, and there its first fruits reached maturity, yet soon the movement had spread afar.

Europe in the fifteenth century was still in a very unsettled state, the chief centres of culture and civilisation being found in the great centres of trade, which, banded together in the Hanseatic League, had exercised such a powerful influence during the Middle Ages, not only dominating and monopolising trade, but by the powers of the purse dictating the policies of nations, even setting up and de-throning kings. Among these cities Bruges was the greatest dépôt of the north, while that of Central Germany is found in Nürnberg, and in each of these centres a school of art arose, worthy to rival that of Italy itself.

Nürnberg in the fifteenth century had grown to be the great mart of central Europe. The riches of the East poured in from Venice, the furs of Russia from Novgorod, to be distributed

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by the Nürnberg merchants to northern and western Europe. Her burghers were wealthy and prosperous; her merchants travelled far. Between Venice especially and Nürnberg there was a busy trade, so much so that the German merchants there had their own exchange, the building decorated by Giorgione and Titian in the beginning of the sixteenth century.

It was in such a community as this, busy and prosperous, that German art was to rise to its greatest heights.

In the words of Goethe, "No Medici smiled on German art." The Church there was hardly the powerful patron that she was in Italy. The sturdy burghers viewed with disfavour her encroachments on private liberty, and kept their priesthood under strict rule, and when the Reformation came, it found in Nürnberg many of its staunchest adherents. The art that flourished in such an atmosphere was free and independent in its tone, its patrons were the wealthy citizens themselves.

The German character differed largely from that of Italy. A certain gaiety and lightness belongs to the south, contrasting strongly with

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the deep seriousness of the more northern race. German art is surcharged with thought, a quality at once its glory and its defect. The ideal of beauty is less obvious there, it is expressive rather than sensuous, dramatic rather than lyric.

If we look at the portraits of the old German merchants, see their strong serious faces, we find we have struck a race like the English Puritans, and so German art is marked by rugged strength and dramatic force, showing almost a contempt for the softer and more delicate qualities. It is an art masculine and virile in its every manifestation.

We shall find, too, that while the intellectual side of the Renaissance movement in Italy, when once it cast off the fetters of the Middle Ages, tended rather in its admiration for classical literature and art to a sort of glorified paganism, to a scheme of life at once materialistic and frankly irreligious; in Germany the bent of the people still continued strongly religious. It was there that the great Reformation movement arose, upsetting the hierarchy of the priesthood and establish-

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ing in its place a form of religion marked by a direct individual responsibility. In this evolution of public opinion we shall see that art played an important part.

It was on the 11th of March 1455 that a young Hungarian goldsmith, Albert Dürer, after a long sojourn in the Netherland's, entered Nürnberg. By a strange coincidence, on the same day one of the leading citizens of the town, Philip Pirkheimer, whose name was destined to be intimately connected with that of Dürer, celebrated his marriage feast, and there was a great dance in the open air under the big lime-tree. Struck with the prosperity of the place, and, no doubt, on such a day of festivity receiving a hearty welcome, the traveller resolved to settle there.

Evidently a skilled craftsman, he had no difficulty in finding employment and entered the service of one Hieronymus Hoper. Serving that master faithfully for twelve years, in 1467, at the age of forty, he received in marriage the hand of his daughter, a fresh young girl of fifteen. Eighteen children were born of the marriage, most of whom died

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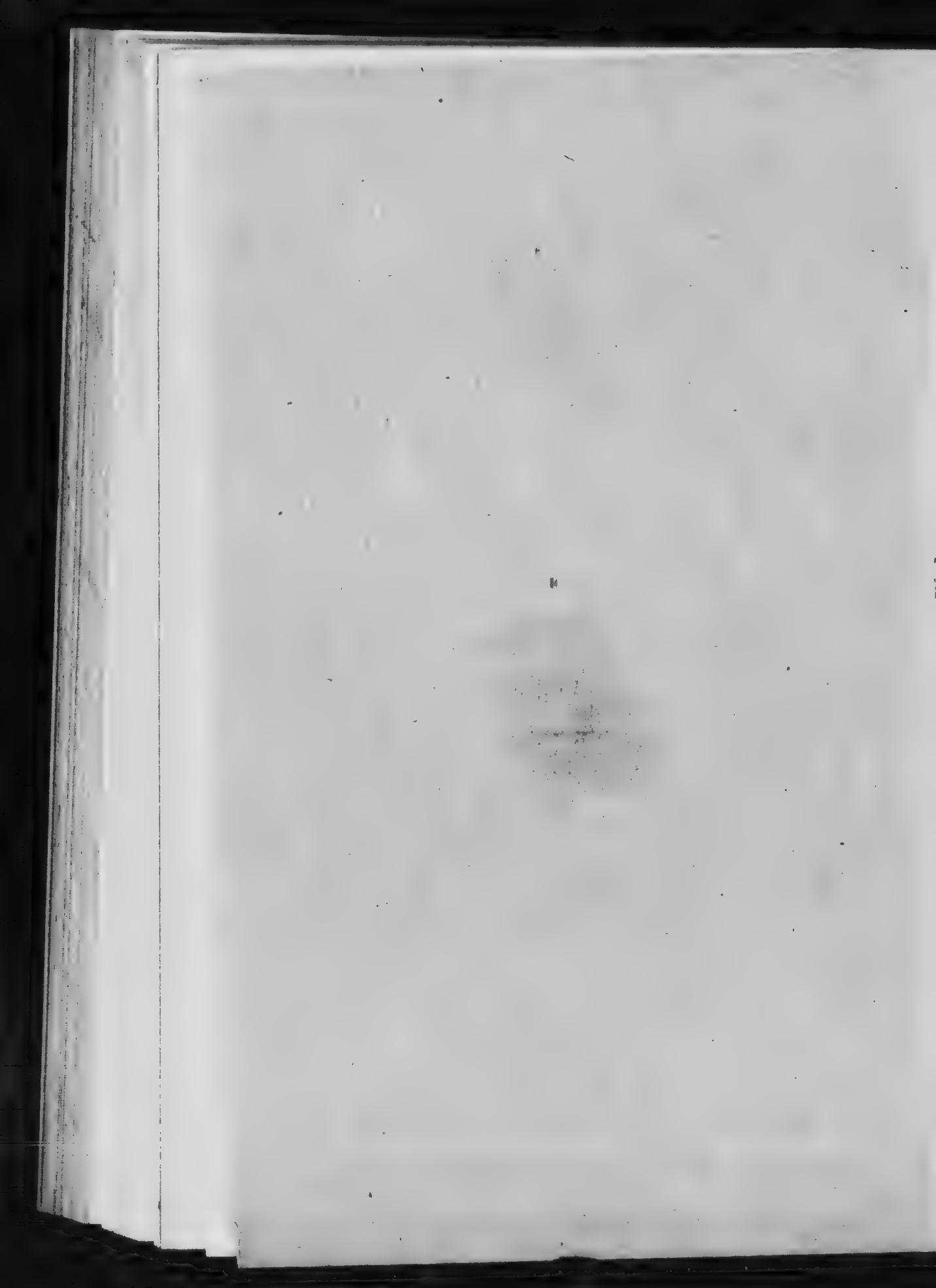




ALBERT DÜRER

El Prado, Madrid

Dürer



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during infancy, the third child being a boy, Albrecht Dürer, who was born on the 21st of May 1471.

How well the young craftsman had done in the town and in what estimation he was held is evident from the fact that Anton Koburger, the famous Nürnberg printer, was godfather to the child.

In those days the Dürers rented from Philip Pirkheimer the back part of his large house, and growing up with young Albert Dürer was young Wilibald Pirkheimer, his lifelong friend, and a man destined to play an important part in the fortunes of his native city.

In 1475 the elder Dürer built a house for himself, and in 1482 his growing importance is shown by the fact that he was appointed Master of the Guild of Goldsmiths. He never grew rich, the claims of his large family prevented that, but he was universally esteemed and took a leading part in the affairs of the town. His features are familiar to us from the fine portrait painted by his son, now in the National Gallery, and in Dürer's record of his family history, his character is recorded

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with no less tenderness. "He passed his life in great toil and stern hard labour. . . . He underwent, moreover, manifold afflictions, trials and adversities. But he won just praise from all who knew him, for he lived an honourable, Christian life, was a man patient of spirit, mild and peaceable to all, and very thankful towards God. For himself he had little need of company and worldly pleasure; he was also of few words and was a God-fearing man."

From the same document we learn that Albert was sent to school, and when old enough placed in his father's workshop. "But when I could work neatly my liking drew me rather to painting than to goldsmith's work so I laid it before my father; but he was not well pleased, regretting the time lost while I had been learning to be a goldsmith. Still he let it be as I wished . . . and in 1486, on St. Andrew's Day my father bound me apprentice to Michael Wohlgemuth to serve him three years long."

The boy was then fifteen, but in the Albertina Collection at Vienna is a silver point portrait of himself, with the inscription: "I did this

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counterfeit of myself from a mirror in 1484, when I was still a child." It is a charming little drawing, firm and clear, and for a child of thirteen shows extraordinary precocity.

The apprenticeship over, and the painter records that he suffered much from his fellow-apprentice lads, following the old guild custom he set out on his travels, to see the world, and learn by comparing his work with that of other men.

It was at a very important time that Dürer entered on his apprenticeship with Michael Wohlgemuth. Forty years before, the invention of printing had created a new industry, and now presses were springing up everywhere. In Nürnberg his godfather, Anton Koburger, owned one of the largest printing houses in Germany, with twenty-four presses and one hundred men. But a new development of still greater moment took place by the introduction of woodcut illustrations. Their immediate popularity was due to the fact that the pictures were no less read than the text. Issued as broadsheets they formed the books of the illiterate, and it is not too much to say

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that in popular education the woodcut in Germany played the same part as the fresco paintings of the Italian churches.

Dürer's master, Wohlgemuth, was one of the first artists to turn his attention to the designing of woodcuts. In 1463, while Dürer was absent on his travels, an especially important work was issued from the press of Anton Koburger, Schedel's World-Chronicle, illustrated by more than two thousand woodcuts, the illustrations being designed by Wohlgemuth. It was a huge success, and when Dürer returned to Nürnberg, he found in the designing of wood blocks a remunerative occupation ready to his hand.

Where exactly he travelled we cannot with certainty tell. He seems first to have wandered through Germany, visiting members of the artistic fraternity in various towns, Colmar, Basle, and so on, being kindly received and no doubt paying his way by working for short spells in different studios. There is good reason to believe that he visited Venice. Certain drawings in his sketch-books of this time reproduce Venetian types and Italian land-

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scapes, and in one of his letters from Venice during his visit in 1506 he uses language implying that he had been there before.

There is a portrait of him at this time, now in the Felix Collection in Leipzig, representing him as a young man of twenty-two.

That romance played little part in Dürer's life we may judge from the following entry in his family chronicle:—

"When I arrived home Hans Frey entered into negotiations with my father, and gave me his daughter Agnes with a dowry of two hundred florins, and the wedding was celebrated on the 14th of July 1494."

It was a good match for Dürer from a worldly point of view, for the Freys were well-to-do people, and there is no reason to doubt that the couple lived amicably together. But it was a childless marriage, and in his journal Dürer never makes any but the most casual and matter-of-fact references to his wife. An interesting sidelight on their married life is found in Wilibald Pirkheimer's bitter letter to Tscherte after Dürer's death. There was evidently no love lost between him and Frau Dürer. "In

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Albrecht Dürer," he writes, "I have lost the best friend I ever had on earth; and nothing grieves me so much that he should have died so cruel a death. I can ascribe it to none but his wife (after the decree of God), for she gnawed into his heart and to such a degree tormented him that she shortened his life. He was shrivelled up like a bundle of straw, and dared never seek for amusement or go into company for she was always uneasy, though there was no need for her to be so. She watched him day and night, drove him to work hard only that he might earn money and leave it to her when he died." . . .

Poor Pirkheimer evidently cannot stand her. He goes on:—

"She and her sister are not indeed loose, but doubtless honourable and most God-fearing women; still one would prefer a loose woman who bore herself friendly, to such a gnawing suspicious, and scolding pious one, with whom no rest can be had day or night."

Evidently she was a worthy enough woman but probably ignorant and narrow-minded, and little of a companion to her intellectual and

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gifted husband. It is noticeable that while Dürer's references to his father, and more especially to his mother, are marked by the most tender affection, yet he speaks seldom of his wife, and then only in the most matter-of-fact way.

Still, Pirkheimer could hardly have always disliked her so much, and the relations between husband and wife must have been cordial enough, to judge from his jocular remark in one of his letters to Dürer in Venice, "that he would make love to his wife if he did not come back soon," and when he wrote the letter first quoted he was evidently much annoyed that she had sold to some one else a pair of stag's antlers belonging to her husband that he particularly coveted.

But at the time of their marriage Agnes Frey was an attractive girl. The young painter set up his studio in his father's house, where he worked for some years. Among the other paintings he produced at this time is his own portrait, now at Madrid, a replica or a copy being in the Ufizzi Gallery at Florence.

But he was shortly to produce a much more

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important and characteristic work, for in 1498 appeared the first set of wood engravings illustrating the Apocalypse—large blocks of $15\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and full of a dignity of conception and forcibleness of execution, that at once lifted wood engraving to the rank of a fine art.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the issue of this set of engravings. It is as though in Italy the work of Raphael or Michael Angelo had been multiplied indefinitely and distributed broadcast among the people.

One is immediately reminded of the similar outburst of democratic art in Japan in the eighteenth century, when the colour print at a mere nominal price brought art into the homes of the people. But in that case the art itself, though delightful, was somewhat trivial in style. In the case of Dürer's engravings the aim was serious and the theme the highest possible. In nobility of conception and dignity of treatment the work was worthy to compare with the finest art of all ages.

One feels how magnificently he would have

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treated such a work as the *Pilgrim's Progress*, or *Paradise Lost*.

In those woodcuts the actual engraving on the block was carried out by the workmen, and though nothing is more striking than the masterly way in which the artist simplifies his treatment, using only a bold strong line, yet the work suffered to some extent in the transference.

It is probably due to a feeling of dissatisfaction with the process that led Dürer to turn his attention to engraving on copper, where with the burin the actual design is worked on the plate with his own hand. In 1503 appeared the masterly print, the "Arms of Death," in the new process, and henceforward Dürer worked in the two styles—using the broad method of the wood block for his popular work, but engraving in copper the more subtle expressions of his moods.

In 1506 the painter visited Venice again. It is said that the object of his journey was to prevent the pirating of his engravings, but the prolonged nature of his stay—he did not return till 1508—seems to show that this could only

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have been part of the reason. A most interesting record of this visit is contained in the painter's letters to Wilibald Pirckheimer, which reveal a playful and jovial side of his character otherwise hid from us.

There are men of sense in Venice he finds, lute-players, and pipers, good judges of painting. On the other hand "there are also among them some of the most false, lying, thievish rascals. . . . If we did not know them we would think them the nicest men earth could show. For my own part I cannot help laughing at them whenever they talk to me. They know that their knavery is no secret, but they do not care."

Of his younger brother Hans he says:—"I should gladly have brought him with me to Venice, and that would have been useful both to me and him, and he would have learnt the language, but my mother was afraid the sky would fall on him."

And then he goes on—"I don't think I shall be able to come home before next autumn. . . . If you see fit don't speak of this further and I will keep putting off my leaving from

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day to day and writing as though I was just coming."

He seems to have expanded in sunny atmosphere, and in one letter confesses he was even as frivolous as to go and take a lesson in dancing. Coming home he writes—"How I shall freeze after this sun. Here I am a gentleman—at home only a parasite."

His remarks on Italian art are full of interest. It is noticeable how entirely out of sympathy he seems to be with the rising Venetian schools, Giorgione and Titian are not mentioned by him, though it is probable that at this very date they were engaged on the frescoes of the new German Exchange — his praises are reserved for their master, Giovanni Bellini.

With other Italian artists he maintained cordial relations and with Raphael he exchanged drawings. It is evident, however, that he was rather piqued at being set down by the Italians merely as an engraver and not as a painter. His great work in Venice, the altarpiece "The Feast of the Rose Garlands," for the German church of San Bartolommeo, was

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painted by him almost as an answer to a challenge.

Still there is no doubt that the Italian verdict is the verdict of posterity. It is not as a painter that we value Albert Dürer chiefly. His portraits in oil—a magnificent series—are unsurpassed, but his sacred pictures, even the great "Adoration" in the Imperial Gallery, Vienna, or the "Four Apostles" in the Pinagothek, Munich, leave us comparatively cold.

The real man is to be seen in his line work, in his wonderful series of woodcuts and copper plates.

The painter had now attained full maturity, and the years following his return from Venice are among the most prolific of his life.

The year 1511 was his great publishing year for woodcuts. He had set up a printing press of his own, and now issued his own books and prints. In that year appeared the set of woodcuts illustrating the life of the Virgin, then followed the two sets, "The Great Passion," and the "Little Passion." With these prints his fame spread far and wide till his name be-

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came a household word. In the year 1513 appeared the famous copper engraving of "The Knight, Death, and the Devil," and in the next year the equally renowned "Melancholia."

Here in these two plates we have concentrated the spirit of Dürer—itself the essence of all that is finest in German art—a strange combination of deep thought, mysticism, and religious fervour.

The first is like an illustration for the *Pilgrim's Progress*; the second seems the embodiment of the words in Ecclesiastes:—"All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. . . . I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

When the Emperor Maximilian visited Nürnberg in 1512 he commissioned the painter to design and execute in wood engravings a most curious undertaking. It consisted of ninety-two blocks, illustrating the events of his reign, and when put together formed a triumphal arch, $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and 9 feet in width. It

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was followed by a "Triumphal Procession," of which part was made from Dürer's designs.

In 1515 he was constituted Court Painter with an annual pension of one hundred florins.

Among other work executed for the Emperor a splendid Book of Hours, printed at Augsburg by Schönsberger, was decorated by the painter with marginal drawings of greatest delicacy and grace, and marked by amazing inventive capacity.

In the Albertina, Vienna, is a charcoal drawing of Maximilian with the painter's quaint inscription: "This is the Emperor Maximilian, whose likeness I, Albrecht Dürer, have taken at Augsburg, high up in the palace in his little chamber, in the year of grace 1518 on Monday after St. John the Baptist's day." He afterwards issued a woodcut from the drawing, which also served as the basis of a portrait in oil, now in the Imperial Gallery, Vienna.

Maximilian died in 1519, and next year Dürer, accompanied by his wife, undertook a journey to the Netherlands, chiefly for the purpose of seeing his successor Charles v. and having his pension confirmed by him, an end which he

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successfully accomplished. His impressions on the journey are recorded in a diary, and in a sketch-book full of the most delightful drawings.

He visited Antwerp, Brussels, Bruges, and other towns, and everywhere was received with the greatest honour.

He returned in the following year, but his health never seems to have been quite the same afterwards, and the rest of his life is not marked with the same activity as before.

During the troublous period of the Reformation Dürer was one of the firm adherents of the Lutheran party, but the skilful guiding of the rulers of the town tided over the anxious times without riot or bloodshed.

On the 6th of April 1520 he died suddenly, in the fifty-seventh year of his age.

An interesting bypath in the work of Dürer is formed by the series of book-plates which he designed for his friends.

For Dürer, living in a time of intense intellectual vitality, played a leading part in the events of the day. Like Sir Joshua Reynolds, he was a member of a select circle, consisting

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of the most brilliant society of Nürnberg, to a place to which he was entitled no less by his social and intellectual qualities than by his artistic genius. The book-plates seem not to have been commissions but gifts to these friends.

First among these we have his friend Wilibald Pirkheimer. Born in the same house as Dürer—educated in Italy, a deep student, statesman, soldier, historian, and man of letters—he was one of the leading men of his day. Passionate in temper, and as years rolled on, apt to be petulant, he was a great contrast to the mild painter.

Then we have one of the most famous of the religious reformers in Nürnberg, Lazarus Spengler, “a jurist among theologians, and a theologian among jurists.”

Spengler and Pirkheimer were among the first adherents of Luther in Nürnberg, and both were included in the papal bull of excommunication levelled against him. Truth compels us to add that both were fain to make rather an ignominious appeal for the withdrawal of the ban.

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Another well-known figure is Johann Stabius, historiographer to the Emperor Maximilian, mathematician, astronomer, and poet, one of the most learned men of the day. It was chiefly through his instrumentality that Dürer was commissioned to execute the Triumphal Arch for Maximilian.

Then, too, we have Johann Tscherte, the imperial architect, to whom Pirkheimer, after Dürer's death, sent the peevish letter that did so much to blacken the character of his friend's wife.

For all these friends Dürer designed book-plates which, in addition to their historic interest, are unsurpassed as specimens of heraldic design.



CHAPTER SEVEN

**VELASQUEZ
THE FIRST OF THE IMPRESSIONISTS**



CHAPTER SEVEN VELASQUEZ FIRST OF THE IMPRESSIONISTS

THE GREAT SPANISH PAINTER MAY truly be said to have been born under a lucky star. Not only was he marvellously endowed by nature, for from the earliest stage his work is firm and sure, and he seemed equipped with an entire mastery of technique from the beginning, but circumstances also seemed to conspire in every way to assist him.

He appeared just at the one time when his genius could receive full development. Had he been born in the fifteenth century, instead of just at the close of the sixteenth, he would have had no choice but to work as a painter in one of the religious houses, his work strictly confined by his ecclesiastical patrons to the narrowest groove. For painting in Spain had not the same free development as in Italy.

Spain had not known the general artistic and literary revival which, in its worship of the classics, emancipated Italian art from the thralldom of the Church. In Spain life had taken sterner lines. Religion was there a matter of the deepest seriousness, for the infidel was at

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their very doors. For seven hundred years the bitter war against the Moors went on, only ending with the fall of Granada in 1492.

The Spanish Church was fiercely fanatical. The Inquisition was its weapon, it laid little stress on the milder aspects of religion, and demanded from the painters of the Church plain statements of moral truths, with a strong insistence on the perils of disobedience. An officer of the Inquisition was entrusted with the duty of examining pictures and certifying that they contained nothing contrary to the teachings of the Church.

It is said that Piero Torrigiano, the burly sculptor who in his youthful days broke Michael Angelo's nose with a blow of his fist, died in the dungeons of the Inquisition. He had finished a figure of the Virgin for an ecclesiastical patron, who offered him less than the price agreed. In a fury the sculptor seized a hammer and smashed the statue to pieces. The Inquisition decreed that this was an act of sacrilege, and flung him into prison, where, to avoid a worse fate, he starved himself to death.

So while the art of the Renaissance painting

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in Italy progressed from the days of Giotto step by step until it culminated in a burst of glory in the middle of the sixteenth century, art in Spain remained almost stationary.

But with the coming of Charles v. there was a change. The soldier king's Italian campaigns had rendered him familiar with the flower of Italian art, and the painter Titian was his favourite master, painting his portrait again and again. He was the first of a series of Spanish kings who atoned for the previous centuries of neglect by a liberal patronage of the arts. The office of Court painter was instituted, Antonio Moro, the Fleming, a follower of the Van Eycks, being the first of a series of whom Velasquez is the most illustrious.

A forerunner too had appeared in the last years of the sixteenth century, the first of the naturalistic painters of Spain, Domenico Theotocopulas, better known as "El Greco." A Cretan, he had studied under the great Venetians and came to Spain somewhere about the year 1577. The churches of Toledo still contain the bulk of his religious pictures, strange theatrical visions of intense power; but more

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important still is the fine series of portraits in the Prado Museum, Madrid, a wonderful gallery of Spanish types, and painted with a subtlety and insight which is something quite new.

Opportune in the time of his debut on the world's stage, Velasquez was fortunate also in his birth-place, for it was in Seville that, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, a vigorous and realistic school of Spanish painting took its rise.

Born there of good parentage, he was early placed in contact with the most cultured men of the day, and formed acquaintances destined to be most serviceable in his future career.

His first master was the elder Herera, a wild and erratic painter of considerable power. He possessed, however, a most ungovernable temper, which rendered his tuition a somewhat painful experience, and the young Velasquez only remained a few months under his charge. His next teacher was of quite a different type, Francisco Pacheco, a man of wide culture, and a *littérateur*, whose house was the rendezvous of all the leading figures in the literary and artistic world of Seville. In his later days he held the

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important post of familiar or art censor to the Inquisition, and very curious were some of his decisions. The representation of the nude human form was forbidden absolutely, even the bare feet of the blessed Virgin must be covered, and in his book, *El arte de la pintura*, the author solemnly gives his reasons for objecting to the representation of the Christ child as naked. In the first place, it was irreverent to the Christ Himself; in the second place, it was imputing a lack of maternal care to the Virgin, who surely would not expose the babe unclad to the inclement air.

One would fancy that the tuition the young painter would get from this dry old pedant would be rather lacking in character, but it would at least be sound and thorough. The fact is, that even from an early age the boy was his own master, and Pacheco had the good sense to let him go his own way. He had a Moorish slave as his servant, and he drew and painted him unweariedly, in every attitude and expression. *Bodegones* or kitchen pieces, too, he produced in numbers during his pupilage ; wonderful studies of still life, with all the pre-

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cision of the old Dutch masters, but with something added of a more virile character. Most of these *bodegones* are now in England, one in the National Gallery, one in Sir Frederick Cook's collection at Richmond, and the most famous of all, "The Water Carrier of Seville," in the Duke of Wellington's collection at Apsley House.

Pacheco was quick to mark the outstanding merits of his pupil, and in 1618, at the age of nineteen, he married him to his daughter Francisca. "After five years of education and instruction," he says, "I gave him my daughter in marriage, encouraged thereto by his virtues, his general bearings and fine qualities, and by the hopes which his happy nature and great talent raised in me." By this marriage Velasquez gained a devoted wife, and also the hearty support of his influential father-in-law, who even at this early stage saw in the future a great career for the young painter.

In 1621 Philip III. died, and his son Philip IV., a lad of eighteen, succeeded to the throne. His chief adviser was the Count Duke Olivares, a great patron of art and letters who formerly had spent much of his time in Seville. Fur-

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nished by his father-in-law with letters of introduction, in April 1622 Velasquez set out for Madrid, but alas the Court was too busy with other affairs to pay any attention to the artist, and he returned home without any material result. A year after, however, he received a communication from the Duke of Olivares, commissioning him to come to Madrid to paint the portrait of the young King.

The portrait, said to have been an equestrian one, was a great success, the fortunate youth was made painter to the King, and received a position in the royal household.

To us the awarding of a menial position in the royal service, as a recognition of the work of an artist, seems a strange reward, but there is no doubt it was what the painter ardently desired. It is difficult for us thoroughly to realise the conditions. The field open to an artist was then very limited. There was the Church—and religious paintings appealed but little to Velasquez—and there was portraiture. But private patrons were few, and the prestige attached to a position in the royal household was invaluable; the salary, though small, placed

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the painter beyond absolute want, and doubtless the duties were not very onerous.

Then, too, the Spanish character, its excessive personal pride, combined with an extraordinary deference to the throne, made a place at Court a prize worthy the ambition of the highest.

At the age, then, of twenty-four we see the young painter settled at Madrid. Rooms at the palace were assigned to his use, his future was assured. The King viewed him with special favour, and spent a great deal of time in his studio. As for Velasquez, he began now the wonderful series of portraits of his royal master that only ended with his life, which not only shows step by step the upward growth of the painter's powers, but is also a pitiless, almost a pathological, record of the life of the King, from his gay and debonair youth to his enfeebled and debauched old age.

But though in his hands the great empire of Spain crumbled slowly away, one cannot withhold a certain kindly feeling for the King, on account of the pleasure he seemed to take in the society of the painter, and his attention to

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his welfare. To Charles I. and Philip IV. we all owe a debt of gratitude, the one for Van Dyke, the other for Velasquez.

Needless to say, his good fortune was viewed with jealousy by the older painters of the Court, who said of him "that he could paint heads but nothing else,"—Velasquez replied imper- turbably that they did him much honour, that for his part he knew no painter for whom he could say so much. However, an open competition instituted by the King, the subject being "The Expulsion of the Moriscos," placed the painting of Velasquez beyond cavil, for the judges awarded him the prize. As a fresh mark of the King's favour he received the post of Gentleman Usher, and as time went on his position at Court grew more and more important. It was still, however, a comparatively menial office. In the records of the Court we find that in the state bull-fights, held then in the Plaza Major, a place at one of the windows was allotted to Velasquez, along with the Court barbers and other officials of that stamp.

In 1628 an event occurred which had a lasting

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effect on the fortunes of the painter. Rubens, the great Flemish painter, then at the height of his fame, visited Madrid, charged with a diplomatic mission, for he was ambassador as well as painter. In addition to his duties of state he found time to paint not only a number of portraits, but also to copy a number of pictures in the royal collection. During his visit his chief companion was Velasquez, in whose company he visited the Escurial, and who acted as his guide to the royal collections.

It is extraordinary how little the work of so renowned an artist affected the style of the younger man. After he had gone Velasquez painted the greatest of the pictures of his first period, "Los Borrachos," or "the Topers." Here the subject, a half-nude youth posed as Bacchus and surrounded by a group of drinking peasants, to some extent recalls the work of Rubens, but the treatment is entirely that of Velasquez, still a little hard perhaps, but masterly in its decision and power.

One happy result of the visit of Rubens to the Spanish Court was that Velasquez conceived

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the desire of visiting Italy to finish his studies there, and doubtless the elder painter influenced the King on his behalf, for the matter was speedily arranged, and on the 10th of August 1629 Velasquez set sail from Barcelona in the train of Don Ambrosio Spinola, the victor of Breda, who was proceeding to Italy to take command of the Spanish troops there.

First visiting Milan, Velasquez went on to Venice, where he admired particularly the works of Titian and Tintoretto. In 1630 he arrived in Rome. During his stay there, amidst other more important works, he produced two beautiful little landscape sketches in the garden of the Villa Medici, where he was staying, quite modern in their fresh and naturalistic style.

Early in 1631 he returned again to Madrid, after an absence of about a year and a half. It was probably just after his return that he painted the full-length portrait of King Philip now in the National Gallery.

Probably at this time, too, was painted the charming profile portrait of a lady, which in all probability is the painter's wife, Dona Juana

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Pacheco. It is noticeable how very rarely Velasquez painted a female portrait. In fact, with the exception of the members of the royal family there are only three examples known, all seemingly close relatives of his own.

First we have Dona Juana Pacheco just referred to, then the beautiful "Lady with the Fan" of the Wallace collection, said to represent the painter's daughter Francisca, and one of the most exquisite of all his works. The last is the head of a little girl, formerly in the Kann collection. From its likeness to the lady with the fan it is probably her daughter and the grandchild of the painter.

The period of eighteen years between the first and second visits to Italy, from 1631 to 1649, is comparatively uneventful, but sees the steady advance of the artist both in his art and in his position at Court.

Gentleman Usher in 1627, he was appointed an Officer of the Wardrobe in 1634, and in the beginning of 1643 Gentleman in Waiting to the King, and in 1647, in addition to his other duties, he was made Inspector of Buildings. But these were comparatively empty honours

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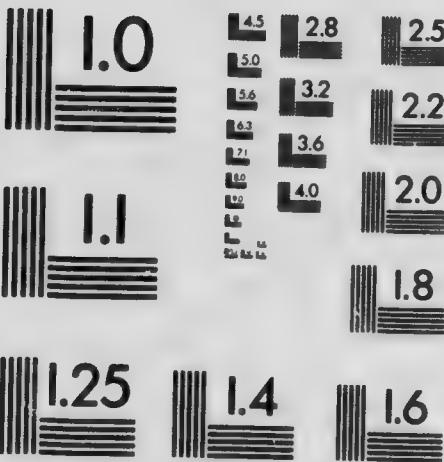
for we hear time after time of petitions presented by the painter for payment of arrears of salary due to him. The petitions were duly received by the King, an order for payment granted on an empty Treasury, and the poor artist was no better off than before.

A more satisfactory result is to be obtained from the study of the art of Velasquez during this period. He seems to have been closely attached to the person of the King, accompanying him in his hunting expeditions to his country seat at El Pardo, north of Madrid. Interesting souvenirs of these expeditions are to be found in the hunting portraits of the King, his brother Ferdinand, and the little Prince Balthazar Carlos, all in hunting costume, and in the large picture of the Boar Hunt which we are so fortunate as to possess, and which adorns the National Gallery.

At this time occurred an event which gave Velasquez the opportunity for some of the most important works of his life. The Duke of Olivares built for the King the new Palace of the Buen Retiro, the great hall of which, the "Salon de los Reinos," it fell to the lot of



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Velasquez to decorate. Titian's equestrian portrait of Charles v. formed a worthy model, and in succession he produced the great equestrian portraits which are now in the Prado. Here too is hung the great historical picture, "The Surrender of Breda."

The annals of art can show nothing more magnificent than this series. They defy all the facts of history. Though the Spanish empire crumble to ruin, Philip the Weak bestrides with inimitable grace his galloping charger, every inch a king. Olivares, the general who never saw war, still waves on victorious armies, and the little prince Don Balthazar Carlos, in whose untimely grave so many fond hopes were buried, still wears the bloom of eternal youth—fresh and sweet as the fragrance of a flower.

It is interesting to compare the series with Titian's portrait. It is first and last a decoration, rich and harmonious in colour. But Velasquez, in addition to superb decorative effect, gives us much more—horse and man are alive, and the figures are posed in a clear luminous landscape of green valley and distant

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blue mountains—the landscape of El Pardo—against which they stand up with the illusion of reality. It looks as if you could throw a stone and it would fall far out on the plain below. Never before was landscape rendered in art with such absolute atmospheric truth.

In 1649 Velasquez for the second time visited Italy, not on this occasion as a student, but to purchase works of art for the King. During his stay in Rome, his fame having reached the ears of the Pope, Innocent x., he asked him to paint his portrait. It was a year since Velasquez had left Spain, and during that time he had never touched a brush. So before tackling so important a commission he wished "to get his hand in," as we say. His Moorish servant, Juan de Pareja, was with him, and as a preparation for the other work Velasquez dashed off his portrait, a study which for ease and vigour is unsurpassed among his works. The portrait was exhibited in Rome in the Pantheon on the occasion of the festival of St. Joseph, where it excited universal admiration, and the artist was unanimously elected a member of the Roman Academy. The portrait of the Pope was in its

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turn a masterpiece. It still hangs in the Doria Palace, and even in Italy, the land of pictures, need fear comparison with none. Sir Joshua Reynolds copied it, and pronounced it the finest picture in Rome.

Velasquez returned to Spain in 1651, and in the last ten years of his life we have the time of his fullest maturity. In 1652 he received still further advancement in the service of the King, being appointed Grand Marshal of the Palace. The post was an important one and carried with it a good salary, but the duties were onerous, and so the works of the last period, though the finest of all, are few in number.

To this period belong most of the curious series of dwarfs in the Prado. Two of them—"El Nino de Vallecas" and "El Bobo de Coria"—are among the most marvellous of his paintings. Don Juan of Austria, too, the juggler with the sad haunting face, painted loosely and freely with liquid paint, almost like a water colour; and the two Spanish beggar-men, dubbed "Aesop" and "Menippus"; the first a rough sturdy fellow with iron-grey hair, painted with extraordinary force; the second

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a cunning smooth old rogue, with a leer just flickering over his face,—all these belong to this last period. The Philip iv. in the National Gallery forms the last of the long series in which the features of the King are immortalised, in the fine words of R. A. M. Stevenson, "touched to the suavity of impersonal beauty."

Then come the two great masterpieces in which he sums up his life's work, "Las Hilanderas" and "Las Meninas." Two noble canvases in which we find foreshadowed, two hundred years before, all that the modern impressionists have discovered. In the last, palette in hand, the painter has introduced his own figure, dignified, unobtrusive, and observant. It is a parable of his life. In 1659, just before his death, a last honour came to him, the knighthood of the order of Santiago.

In 1660 Velasquez, as Grand Marshal of the Palace, was in charge of the royal journey to and from the frontier, where at the Isle of Pheasants the arrangements for the marriage of Maria Theresa and Louis XIV. of France were completed. Not long after his return he

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fell ill, and a few weeks after he died at the age of sixty-one. His faithful wife Juana Pacheco only survived him a week.

It is a far cry to Madrid ; at least, it seems so though as a matter of fact it is only forty-eight hours' journey from London, and Velasquez is still little known to the majority of art lovers, for it is in Madrid only that his work can be studied adequately.

But nowhere in the world is there such another shrine of art as the Velasquez room in the Prado. Around you, arranged in chronological order, are some forty masterpieces, the chief works of the master's life, which give a complete record of the development of his art. Not quite complete ; there are two gaps, one at the beginning, one at the end. The first, the lack of any example of the early *bodegones*, may in time be filled by private generosity ; the other could only be done away with by the presence of the "Venus with the Mirror." So until the time comes when the true interests of art are seen, and straying masterpieces come back, like homing pigeons, to the land of their birth, to form part of really representative col-

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lections, the series at Madrid will be still incomplete.

But such as it is, the Prado series stands as an example and as a forecast. In time, perhaps, the smaller patriotism will give way to something larger, and under International Boards, if need be, we may be able to form collections that are really complete, and so study the great masters, as we do Velasquez at Madrid, not in fragments dispersed over the world, but with the whole record placed at once before us.

Sunday forenoon is the best time to visit the Prado. Through the week the Velasquez room is thronged with copyists, and it is often with difficulty that you can catch even a glimpse of the masterpiece round the edge of some irreverent caricature.

One can study Velasquez in many ways. As I stood before the canvases, their amazing technical qualities, even the irrefined and austere beauty, faded away almost into insignificance before the personality of the artist they reveal. The glorification of technique, which is the great fault of the critic who is himself a

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craftsman, is too apt to obscure the mind to finer issues. As we read Shakespeare in his sublimest passages we almost resent remarks as to the melody of the line, the fluency of the diction ; we sweep aside these considerations as trivial as we stand breathless and overwhelmed by the vastness of the thought.

So with Velasquez. Marvelous as his technique is, and interwoven with the very west and warp of his being, still it is not the great fact about him. It is only the voice with which he speaks, the man behind is greater still.

Born with a perfect vision, a faultless hand, sure of its touch as natural law, endowed with a universal mind, his theme is the world. Nothing to him is common or unclean. He painted the grotesque dwarfs of the Spanish Court with the same thoughtful care as he bestowed on the features of his royal patron. "What, did the hand, then, of the potter shake?" Then that too was to Velasquez a fact worth recording.

There is something very impressive in the way that Velasquez seems to begin where other men leave off, with a complete technical

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mastery. Then throughout his life his mental vision broadens and deepens.

Señor Beruete, in his excellent book, attributes the comparative smallness of the painter's output to the shortsighted policy of Philip in loading him with menial offices. But to me it does not seem that this is the whole explanation. Velasquez, when away in Italy, and practically free from the cares of office, painted but little, and we hear frequently of his indolent nature. Rubens, on the other hand, even in the midst of his ambassadorial duties, turned out pictures almost by the dozen.

Velasquez had, I think, one of those natures which matures by "lying fallow." Had he been more prolific I am afraid he would not have been Velasquez. After a certain point has been reached the mere technical practice of an art is worth little ; nay, it may almost be mischievous unless it is accompanied by a corresponding advance in the vision behind the hand ; and here it is the growth of the whole man, the things that he has seen, the life that he has led, that tells. Look at such a rounded masterpiece as the haunting picture of the

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melancholy jester called Don Juan of Austria, and ask if even Velasquez could have painted it in his earlier days. No, it would have been impossible for Velasquez then, as it has been impossible for every one else before or since. And I think that it was pre-eminently during his periods of inaction that Velasquez gradually ripened and matured, until he attained that mental depth and power which placed him above all but the very greatest.

First we have the *bodegones* and the early portraits, the Philip IV. and the Don Carlos, perhaps a little hard but faultless in drawing and of great dignity; this phase terminating in the almost insolent bravura of "Los Borrachos." Than this mere technical profi-
cience could no further go.

Then comes the first visit to Italy and the beginning of a wider vision and a broader treatment, which steadily grows through the middle period of the painter's life. The great equestrian portraits follow, and the hunting portraits with their beautiful landscape backgrounds, and the strange series of dwarfs and imbeciles.

Then comes the last phase, culminating in the

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two astonishing works, "Las Hilanderas" and "Las Meninas." In the latter we have the painter's supreme achievement. It hangs by itself in a little chapel off the main Velasquez room, a veritable holy of holies. No picture that I have ever seen so filled me with the hushed awe that one associates with the religious sense. And yet what is there to see?—a family group, the little princess with her maids, a sleeping dog, and a fat grotesque dwarf right in the foreground. Behind, the painter at his canvas and the great empty room. That is all, but every æsthetic sense thrills as one gazes. What European artist could match that wonderful composition with its severe straight lines running up to the lofty ceiling, which forms a canopy over the figures grouped below? And then the pure light that pervades everything, as with the calm of a benediction. It is not a painting, it is a miracle.

Once all artistic roads led to Rome, but now the modern painter turns his face to Madrid; for here is the fountainhead of impressionism, the birthplace of naturalism. And here alone, amid the very scenes that inspired him, sur-
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rounded by that limpid atmosphere, that only he has rendered perfectly, we may study the works of the great Spaniard, the king of modern painters.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

REMBRANDT, AND THE MAGIC OF CHIAROSCURO



CHAPTER EIGHT REMBRANDT THE MAGIC OF CHIAROSCURO

FROM AN EARLY DATE THE LOW Countries, as they were called, enjoyed great commercial importance from their position at the mouth of the Rhine, the main waterway of central Europe. Bruges was the great emporium to which the goods of the East poured in from Venice and Nürnberg, to be redistributed to all the countries of northern Europe. But with the discovery of America in 1492, and the route to India in 1497, commerce took a new character, and the old overland trade routes were superseded by the highways of the sea. Antwerp took the place of Bruges, and the hardy Dutch sailors began to go farther and farther afield. Until the end of the sixteenth century the two countries Belgium and Holland were one, and the southern provinces were the most important. In art as well as commerce the Flemish masters took the lead. It was in Bruges that the Van Eycks lived, and conducted the experiments which led to the general introduction of oil painting, and it was there that Hans Memling produced the master-

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pieces that still adorn the little hospital of St. John.

But the long struggle with Spain, a struggle for independence—not political independence only, but religious, intellectual, and moral independence—swept away the old boundaries and created a new country and a new people. In 1581 the independence of the Northern Provinces, Holland and Zealand, was declared, the first Stathouder being William the Silent, and in 1609 it was tacitly recognised by the twelve years' truce with Spain.

From this time the southern provinces lagged behind in the race, still under the yoke of Spain, and still in the bonds of the old religion. Antwerp, from 1488 to 1570 the greatest commercial city in Europe, was ruined by its double sack in 1576 and 1585, its wealthy merchants dispersed to seek fresh homes in London, Hamburg, and Amsterdam.

It had been a long and bitter struggle, the land had run with blood, but all the latent forces of vigour and manliness in the Dutch character had been called forth. And now in the flush of victory, having won their battle against the

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most powerful state in Europe, the Dutch people turned to seek fresh fields in which to employ their energies.

In spite of the strain of war, and its steady drain on the resources of the country, they were wealthy. Their fleets ruled the sea, and they had almost a monopoly of the Eastern trade. At home, too, they carried comfort and luxury to a pitch hitherto unknown. It was the Dutch who introduced the extensive use of vegetables—now the inevitable accompaniment of civilised life—thereby stamping out what was then the common scourge of leprosy. Indeed, the country still is a gigantic market garden. And in their hours of ease they turned their attention to the cultivation of flowers. Holland is still famous for its bulbs, and the tulip gardens of Haarlem are still one of the sights of Europe. In the early years of the seventeenth century horticulture was a fashionable hobby, and fortunes were made and lost by speculation in tulip bulbs.

It was in this atmosphere of bourgeois prosperity that Dutch art arose, an art homely in a sense, and yet marked by qualities both of

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power and dignity, and characterised by a delicate sense of beauty all its own, the beauty that adds to its charm the element of surprise, for the Dutch painters explored new ground and discovered beauty in the most unlikely places.

Though landscape painting began in Italy, and was carried well-nigh to maturity by Giorgione and Titian, it is in Holland that the first real school of landscape painting arose. It was the Dutch painters, too, who first entered thoroughly into the life of the common people, making their joys and sorrows and simple amusements the themes of their paintings.

It was a different world from the art world of Italy. Church painting was dead, public works took the form of civic decorations. These, with portraiture, landscape, and genre, formed the subjects of Dutch painting.

Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn, the greatest of all Dutch painters, was born in 1606, or thereabouts, in Leyden. His father, Harmen Gerritsz, who added to his name the suffix "van Rijn," was a miller, owning a half share in a mill which stood close to the White Gate of the

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city. A hard-working honest man, thrifty and evidently of some importance in the town, although not wealthy. His mother, Neeltje (Cornelia) Suydtbroeck, was the daughter of a baker.

The boy was duly sent to school, and it was the ambition of his parents that he should study afterwards at the famous University of Leyden, founded to commemorate the siege of the town by the Spaniards, and for two hundred years one of the first seats of learning in Europe.

Such study was little to the taste of the future painter, and though he entered the University on May the 25th, 1620, at the age of fourteen, he shortly afterwards persuaded his parents to apprentice him to a certain Jacob von Swanenburg, a painter of Leyden, with whom he studied three years.

At that time an old playmate of his, Jan Lievens, returned from Amsterdam, where he had been studying painting under Pieter Lastman, and, urged by him, Rembrandt decided to go to Amsterdam. But Lastman's teaching, based on the methods of the most decadent

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Italian style, was not at all to his taste, and after staying with him for some six months he returned to Leyden, resolved to "study and practise painting in his own way."

What his methods were, beyond the vigorous study of nature, we do not know. From his masters he had obtained a thorough technical grounding, not only in painting, but evidently also in etching. Now he sketched perpetually everything that came his way. The landscape of his native district, with its canals and windmills, he recorded in innumerable drawings and etchings.

His family figure in many paintings, etchings, and drawings. Especially he never tires of depicting the kindly face of his old mother, and when at a loss for another model he makes use of himself, a practice which he kept up through life, and which doubtless has in it a naïve touch of vanity. It is suggested that his love for effects of chiaroscuro grew out of his study of the dusky shadows and strong lights of the old mill, lit by its one small window, a suggestion which is a very likely one.

Already in 1628 he had obtained a pupil,

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Gerard Dou, destined to become famous as a painter of genre scenes and of still-life. But Leyden was too small for him, and as his powers grew he felt the need of a larger field. His father died in 1630, and so the old home was broken up. The mill was carried on by his elder brother Adrien, while in 1631 Rembrandt, taking with him his sister Lysbeth, settled in Amsterdam.

The city then was in the full height of its prosperity. Evelyn ten years afterwards describes it as "the most busie concourse of mortals now upon the whole earth, and the most addicted to commerce." The Jews' quarter particularly seems to have fascinated the painter, who never tired of depicting its strongly marked types, using them, no doubt from the most conscientiously realistic motives, in his religious pictures.

The young artist seems to have had no difficulty in finding patrons, and he had only been a year in Amsterdam when he obtained a commission, the result of which made him at one bound the most fashionable painter of the town.

In the previous century the dissection of the

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human body had been legalised in Holland and like other guilds the surgeons were fond having themselves immortalised in those large portrait groups so characteristic of Dutch art.

To celebrate his term as Professor of Surgery Dr. Nicholas Tulp commissioned Rembrandt to paint a group of the Guild of Surgeons.

The painter has grouped his subjects round the table on which lies the corpse. The professor holding the dissected tendons of the arm in a pair of forceps, is lecturing on their use, while his auditors press forward with looks of intense interest. It is a marvellous *tour de force*. The unsightly corpse is forgotten in the dramatic quality with which the scene is endowed and in the individuality and life which characterises the heads of the doctors.

The picture, hung in the dissecting theatre of the guild, was an instantaneous success. Immediately orders came pouring in, and the artist had more work than he could overtake. Pupils too came thronging to him. The best social circles of the city were thrown open to him, and among others he made the acquaintance of Saskia van Aylenborch, a comely

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young Frisian girl of good family and some fortune, who was living in Amsterdam with Jan Cornelius Sylvius, a minister of the Reformed Church.

In 1633 Saskia and Rembrandt were betrothed, and in the following year they were married.

At this time Rembrandt was earning a large income, estimated at as much as from £5000 to £6000 of our money, and, naturally impulsive and generous, his easy success seems to have turned his head a little.

He spent his money in the most reckless way, moving from house to house till he found a commodious one in the best quarter of the town. He had a taste for collecting works of art, old fabrics, armour, articles of vertu, and was a regular attender at the auction sales of the city. When a thing he coveted was put up he would not bid in the ordinary way, but at once secured it by an offer of a high price, saying that a piece of fine art should not be allowed to go cheap.

He showered gifts of jewels and fine clothes on his fresh young wife, to whom he was de-

MASTER PAINTERS: REMBRANDT

voted, so much so that the envious tittle-tattle of her relatives was aroused, and they accused him of squandering her dowry.

Every needy friend found in him a generous patron, for he was one of those who could not send away a borrower empty-handed.

He painted Saskia again and again, decked in gorgeous raiment, and in one fine example, probably painted just after their wedding, she sits on the painter's knee, who, turning his laughing face, raises a glass of wine and quaffs it to the spectator.

But their happy married life was destined to be a brief one. Their first three children died in infancy, and after the birth of her son Titus, 1641, Saskia fell into bad health. In June 1642 she made her will, leaving her fortune to Titus her son, subject to Rembrandt's life-rent, unless he married again, in which case one half of the estate was to be placed in trust for Titus. Doubtless to show her confidence in her husband, she caused a clause to be inserted stipulating that he should be exempted from the legal formalities of taking a valuation of the estate; but, alas, this omission was the cause

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of endless trouble in the years to come. Only about a fortnight afterwards Saskia died.

But this year, so full of sadness for Rembrandt, is marked by one of his most important works, the guild picture, the "Sortie of the Company of Banning Cocq," more popularly known as the "Night Watch."

Strange to say, this work, now looked on as one of the painter's greatest masterpieces, was received with a storm of hostile criticism. The masterly treatment, giving the whole scene an air of life and a dramatic unity, did not please the sitters, each of whom wished to be in an equally prominent position. Then, too, the wonderful chiaroscuro which delights us, as the magic by which Rembrandt conjures up beauty from the dusky depths, seemed to them only forced and strange. The "Prince of Darkness" they dubbed him, and clamoured for more light in the painting.

The fact is, that his success had been too rapid to be firmly based on a true appreciation of his art : it had been a fashion for a time, and, like a fashion, his popularity was to depart as rapidly as it had come.

MASTER PAINTERS:REMBRANDT

It was in vain that the Stathouder, who purchased a number of sacred pictures by Rembrandt, in 1646 ordered two more, paying the former price. A few old friends still stoned him, chief among them Burgomeister Siemssen, number of pupils still came to his studio to learn there as they could nowhere else, but he was no longer the leading painter of Amsterdam.

Then the inevitable happened, his affairs began to get involved. The great house he lived in had never been fully paid for, and other debts grew.

In 1647 his wife's relations insisted, in the child's interests, on having the value of his estate placed on record, a step which certainly was only right and proper.

A year or two after, the beautiful pearl necklace, which he had so often painted in his portraits of Saskia, was sold to a pupil. Soon he had to borrow money, and his brother Adrien, who now carried on the mill, was in difficulties and required his help.

All through his troubles he kept working steadily. His friends helped him all they could.

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by commissions, and when he had no one else to sit he painted his own portrait.

But at last in 1656 matters came to a crisis. A new guardian was appointed for Titus. Rembrandt was declared bankrupt, and an inventory made of all his possessions.

It was during these years of adversity that the sweet face of Hendrickje Stoffels, the homely heroine of Rembrandt's life, begins to appear in his work.

In the year 1649, a young girl of twenty-three, she seems to have been a servant in the house, and from that time often acted as the artist's model. In 1652 she bore a child to him, and in the year 1654 she was summoned before the Church authorities, severely reprimanded for her mode of life, and forbidden to communicate. In 1654 a second child was born (the first having died), a daughter named Cornelia.

But in spite of the censures of the Church and the evil fortunes of the painter, the girl stuck faithfully to him, bringing up his son Titus, who looked on her as on a second mother, and lightening the trials of that miserable time in every possible way.

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MASTER PAINTERS:REMBRA

As years went on even the scandal was down, and in the quaint little household had the status of his wife. Indeed, in a document towards the end of his life she referred to as such, but there is no clear evidence that Rembrandt ever married her, and we know that by the terms of his wife's will it would have been very much to his disadvantage to do so.

An endless litigation went on over the painful affairs, the creditors trying to seize everything, the guardian of the boy Titus trying to see for him at least a share of the assets.

In 1657 Titus made a will, in which he left that he might die possessed of to Hendrickje and Cornelia, in trust for his father, a touchstone of the position of Hendrickje in the household.

She seems to have been full of practical schemes, and in 1660 she and Titus entered into a formal partnership, and opened a shop for the sale of pictures, engravings, and bric-à-brac.

Rembrandt—still an undischarged bankrupt—could not of course participate, but an inge-

THE MAGIC OF CHIAROSCURO

ous arrangement by which he could share in the benefits was made by appointing him their expert adviser, and giving him board and lodging and a certain allowance. The creditors were furious, needless to say.

In 1661 Hendrickje fell ill, and made her will, leaving her money to her daughter, and in case of her death to Titus, his father enjoying the life-rent of the money. We hear of her no more, and it is thought that she died during the next year.

It is nothing less than extraordinary that in the midst of this life of harassing worry Rembrandt produced, in 1671, the great masterpiece of his later years, the "Syndics of the Drapers," worthy to rank with the "Night Watch," the triumph of his middle age.

Happily, in his art he could escape from all mortal worries and cares, and nothing is more striking than the way his genius steadily matures, seemingly away from and independently of all the mere material facts of his life, growing riper and fuller year by year.

The "Syndics of the Drapers" is not a *tour de force* like the "Anatomy Lesson" or the

MASTER PAINTERS:REMBRANDT

"Night Watch." The six merchants are simply round a table, the lighting is quiet and unforced, the colour sombre but rich and monious. Every head is lifelike, but the middle figures turn over the leaves of a ledger while the others look on, thus giving a central point of interest and securing the unity of work. Quiet and reticent it is, a picture which grows in power the longer it is studied.

In 1665 the long litigation over the estate of Rembrandt came to an end, and his son Titus received some 6952 florins as his share. In 1668 he was married to Magdalena van Loo—but his married life was short, as he died in the same year. It is thought that perhaps the picture known as the "Jewish Bride," in Amsterdam, represents Titus and his wife Magdalena.

Rembrandt died on the 4th of October 1669 at the age of sixty-three, a prematurely aged man. He left nothing but his household effects, his clothes, his painting materials, and his works.

It is difficult to overrate his importance in the world of art. He was one of the first of the

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THE MAGIC OF CHIAROSCURO

moderns, and still remains one of the greatest. As an etcher he is unrivalled, as a draughtsman there are few to compare with him in the marvellous facility which enabled him to depict a scene with a few unerring strokes. As a painter he created a style of his own. Like Rubens and Velasquez, his great preoccupation was with the study of light. But while the first was fascinated by its play on iridescent surfaces, especially on the nude human form, and the second dealt with clear luminous spaces, full of light, such as one sees in a Spanish interior, Rembrandt loved to depict the conflict between light and darkness, the beam of light flashing into the obscurity and awakening strange echoes in unknown depths.

CHAPTER NINE

WATTEAU, THE PAINTER OF *FÊTES
GALANTES*

CHAPTER NINE WATTEAU, THE PAINTER OF *FÊTES GALANTES*

AS THE ART OF PAINTING DIED DOWN in one country its flame rose in another, and so the light has been kept continually burning. We have seen that with the decadence of the Italian schools, the great masters of the seventeenth century were found in Spain and the Netherlands ; now, on the threshold of the eighteenth century, in the corrupt and artificial Court of France, is born an art full of delicate grace and fancy, that of the painters of *Fêtes galantes*.

The later work of the school degenerates into shallowness and triviality, but nowhere in the realms of art can one find more poignant and haunting beauties than in the pictorial poems of its founder—Jean Antoine Watteau. The mantle of Giorgione, one who died young, fell on the painter, who never seemed to be of this earth, but turned sad eyes on visions from another world, full of a loveliness akin to tears. In the words of a modern poet, his spirit seems to say—

MASTER PAINTERS : WATTEAU

"Strange the world about me lies,
Never yet familiar grown ;
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me like a face half known.
In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gem-like plains and seas,
I have never felt at home,
Never wholly been at ease."

Jean Antoine Watteau was born at Valenciennes, close to the Belgian frontier, on the 10th October 1684. His father was a tiler and glazier in the town, and seems to have been comparatively well-to-do, considerable contracts passing through his hands.

His house looked out on the market-place where on fair days and holidays the hawkers had their stands, and the strolling players and conjurers their booths. It was a busy lively scene, and the delight of the delicate boy who would sit at the window and sketch the varied types that moved about below. There he first made the acquaintance of the quaint mummers of Italian comedy, then so popular in France—Pierrot and Columbine, Harlequin and Pantaloons, who in later days formed the themes around which played his most delicate fancies.

PAINTER OF *FETES GALANTES*

Alas, in 1697 they were expelled from the kingdom by the edict of the morose Louis XIV., because in Paris they had dared, rashly enough, to caricature both his august majesty and Madame de Maintenon. And so the young Watteau lost his favourite models.

His father appears to have been little in sympathy with the boy's tastes, but in 1698, at the age of fourteen, he was apprenticed to Jacques Albert Gérin, a Valenciennes painter of some capacity. There seems to have been a cordial relationship between the master and his pupil, and another source of instruction was open to him, the numerous fine examples of the Flemish school which adorned the churches of the town and neighbourhood. In the abbey church was a great triptych by Rubens, in the church of Saint Jacques a Van Dyck, and the work of Teniers, who only died in 1690, must also have been well known to him.

In fact the first known work from his brush, "La Vraie Gaité," painted in 1700, has quite a Teniers-like quality, and represents a group of peasants dancing at a tavern door.

In 1701 his master Gérin died, and he was left

MASTER PAINTERS : WATTEAU

to his own resources ; but there was little interest him now in the little town, so after lingering a while Antoine set out on foot for Paris.

Here for a time he almost starved. At last he obtained employment in a workshop near the bridge of Notre Dame, where cheap religious pictures were turned out by the dozen, intended chiefly for the village churches. For this drudgery he was paid three francs a week, with a daily meal of soup. Doubtless it was the privations suffered at this time, acting on a weakly constitution, that laid the seeds of the illness which led to his early death.

His chief employment was turning out effigies of Saint Nicholas, which he did until he had the saint by heart.

At length fortune smiled, and he was able to escape from this slavery. He made the acquaintance of Claude Gillot, a decorative artist of much ability, who in particular was fond of painting scenes from Italian comedy, the Harlequins, Pierrots, and Columbines that Antoine had formerly loved to sketch at Valenciennes.

PAINTER OF *FÊTES GALANTES*

Gillot received him into his house, and for some years he remained there as his pupil and assistant. In his fresh surroundings he made rapid progress, and soon he began to outdo his teacher.

Ill-health had already begun to try him, and already we see the irritable and capricious temper, which so often marks the consumptive, and which characterised him till his death. For some reason or other Gillot and he, who had been the greatest friends, quarrelled, and in 1708 the young painter found himself adrift once more.

But now, at the age of twenty-four, he was not the untrained boy who had entered Paris six years before. He was a skilful craftsman, and had no difficulty in obtaining an engagement, this time with Claude Audran, a decorative painter, who held the post of keeper of the Luxembourg. Under this new master his fancy had fuller play, for his work lay chiefly in the interior decoration of mansions. Two great benefits he also obtained in this situation. In the first place, he had access to the galleries of the Luxembourg, rich in the works

MASTER PAINTERS : WATTE

of Rubens; and secondly, the Luxembourg gardens were open to him. Here, amid shadowed glades, he found his true vocation. He loved to wander there, sketching clumps of great trees, and the daintily dressed figures that walked to and fro beneath them. But under his pencil these familiar scenes came etherealised and filled with a strange and pathetic beauty.

While with Audran he attended the Académie schools and entered with four other students for the *Grand Prix*. Probably the themes "David returning after slaying Goliath," and "Abigail bringing food to David," and the academic treatment demanded, did not satisfy him; in any case, the result was that he only obtained the second place, the coveted prize carrying with it the privilege of visiting Italy, going to a student "Grison," otherwise unknown to fame.

Disgusted with his failure, and probably feeling that he could learn no more from his present master, he suddenly in his capricious way conceived a violent distaste for Paris and all his life there. Nothing would satisfy him

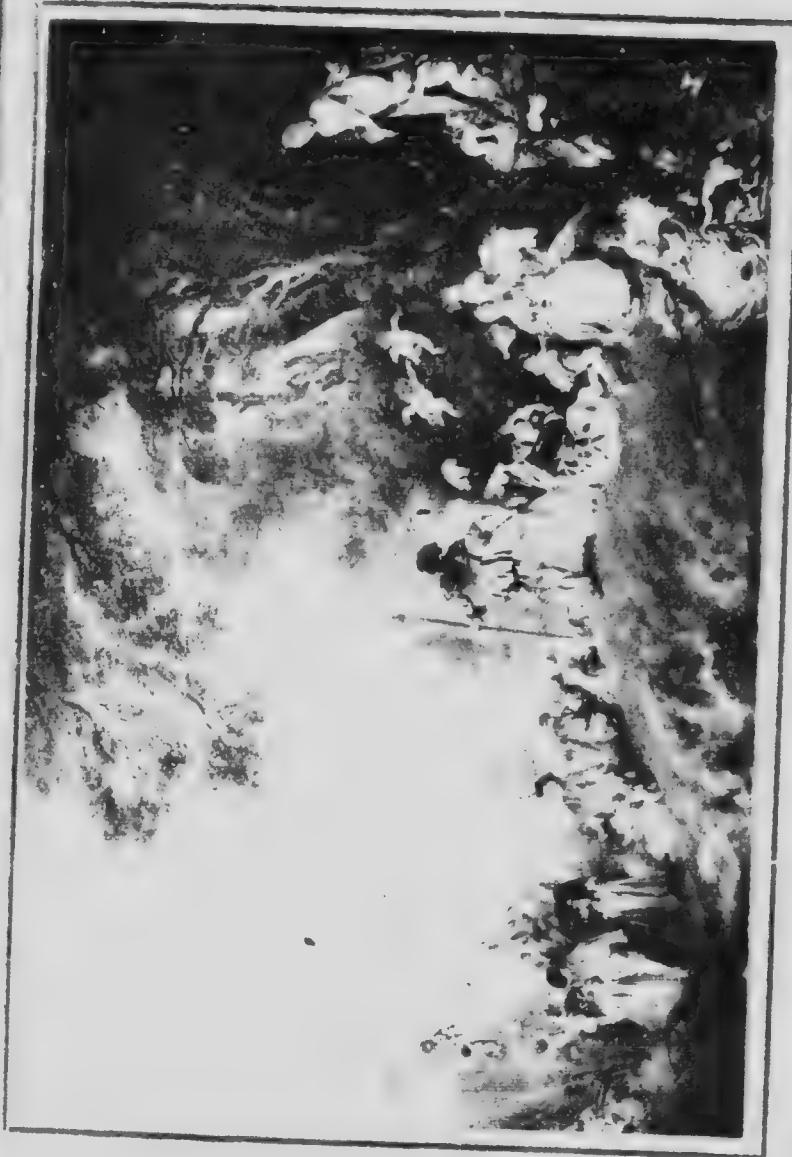
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PAINTER OF *FÉTES GALANTES*

but a return to Valenciennes. But he had no money! However, he had just painted a little military picture, "Départ de Troupe," and on the advice of a friend took it to an art dealer Sirois, who, thus introduced to him, was, with his son-in-law Gersaint, destined to become one of his closest friends, and remain in cordial relations with him till the end of his life.

Sirois offered him sixty livres for the picture, and urged him to paint a second to form a pair, and so, wealthy and happy, Watteau set out for his native town.

Arrived there, he could not have found a better environment for the study of military subjects, for the time was that of the Marlborough wars, and troops continually marched through the town. Wounded men too came straggling back from the front, to be tended by the kindly townspeople, and in one of these, taken into his parents' house, he is said to have found a willing model.

But he soon tired of Valenciennes, and after a short stay returned to Paris. His reputation had grown during his absence, and for

MASTER PAINTERS : WATTE

the companion picture, "Halte de Trou he received from Sirois not sixty but hundred livres.

He painted quite a number of military pi at this time, showing not the tragedy grimness of war, but its life and viva which soon achieved for him a certain p larity.

And in the year 1712 occurs a curious pass in the life of the painter which shows gracious and unexpected light the usually andpedantic Academy. He had neverquite over his disappointment in failing to obtain travelling scholarship, and, still hankering a Italy and lacking the means to go there was suggested to him that perhaps he mi obtain a "pension de Roy." As a means this, and by the help of Sirois, in whose ho he had taken up his abode on his return fr Valenciennes, he had the two pictures "Depart" and "Le Halte" hung in the ve bule of the Academy, where members mi see them as they passed.

One of the Academicians, M. de la Fosse, doubt after consultation with his colleagu

PAINTER OF *FÊTES GALANTES*

sent for the painter, told him that there was no need for an artist of his ability to go to Rome to study, and that the Academy would be proud to receive him as a member. As an additional compliment the subject of his diploma picture was left to his own choice.

About this time Watteau made the acquaintance of M. Pierre de Crozat, a wealthy Parisian, who was the happy possessor of a gallery of some 400 pictures, chiefly of the Italian and Flemish schools, many of them masterpieces. He installed the painter in his own house, placing a suite of rooms at his disposal. Here, in the study of the works of Rubens and the great Venetians, the art of Watteau finally matured itself.

The long reign of Louis XIV. was now drawing to its close. With the King's death in 1715, and the establishment of the Regency, the Court and city flung off the depression which had weighed on it for so long, and revelled in a continual round of gaiety. The Italian players were recalled. Never had Parisian society been so dazzling; never was money squandered so freely.

MASTER PAINTERS : WATTEAU

Crozat formed the centre of one of many similar little coteries composed of grand dandies, artists, poets, and amateurs, joining in a series of picnics, masked balls, and fêtes. Among this brilliant and laughing company Watteau moved, gloomy, irritable, and reserved, rarely lighting up except in the privacy of his painter's room.

It is characteristic of him that he put off year after year the painting of his diploma picture, making many studies but being satisfied with none. The Academy became impatient, and after many fruitless inquiries and extensions of time, at last in January 1717 they demanded its production within a month.

Then, with the spur of necessity urging him on, Watteau sat down and painted his masterpiece, "*L'embarquement pour l'Île de Cythère.*" All the brilliance, all the gaiety of the *fête champêtre*, raised by the painter's genius, into a universal song of love.

He had now, at the age of thirty-three, reached the height of his fame. Every great lady had her boudoir, a sanctum filled with beautiful furniture, rich carpets, fine tapestries,

PAINTER OF *FÊTES GALANTES*

bric-à-brac, and pictures, and no boudoir was complete without one of the master's charming and delicate "Fêtes galantes." All society was open to him, but he preferred the company of a few intimate friends, chief among whom was M. de Julienne, whose wife figures in many of his pictures. He might have amassed wealth if he had cared, but, absolutely indifferent in money matters, he sold his pictures for much less than they would fetch. A cunning barber once even obtained a picture from him in exchange for a wig, and Gersaint records that sometimes the painter would fly into a passion with him for offering him too high a price for his work. After a while he seems to have left Crozat's hospitable roof, and established himself again with his old friend Sirois.

In 1719 he set sail for England, it is said to consult a famous London physician, Dr. Meade, as to his health. But the journey was a mistake. Ill when he arrived, the damp climate and the smoke of London, never the best environment for a consumptive, aggravated his malady. He lived in Greenwich

MASTER PAINTERS : WATTE

during his short stay, and worked diligently leaving behind him a number of beautiful works; but in August 1720 he was glad to return home to France.

Already he was almost a dying man. On arrival in Paris he lived with Gersaint, for he never seems to have set up an establishment of his own, and in spite of that worthy's protest that he would rather that his labour were employed in some more profitable manner than in painting for him, "to take the stiffness of his fingers," a large painting on wood, to hang outside his shop as a sign. It represents the interior of the shop, with a number of customers examining pictures, the figures being portraits of the dealer and his friends.

But his health was rapidly becoming worse. Restless as ever, he left Gersaint for another lodgings, and in the early summer of 1721 was persuaded to go to a little village, Nogent, near Valenciennes, in the hope that the country air might revive his strength.

Strange fancies now haunted him. Formerly so careless about money, he was tormented by a dread of dying penniless. At one time

PAINTER OF *FÊTES GALANTES*

he had numbered among his pupils a fellow-townsman, Pater, but for some reason had dismissed him. Now he wished to make amends, and, sending for the young man, he supervised his studies during the last weeks of his life.

His last desire was to visit Valenciennes once more; the faithful Gersaint would have accompanied him there, but it was too late. His strength was exhausted, and on 18th July 1721 he died, at the early age of thirty-seven. It has been the fate of Watteau as of many another great artist, to be misunderstood. To the public at large he is only the painter of "*Fêtes galantes*," the chief interpreter of the most artificial period of French society, on whose canvases its gaiety and frivolity take life and form. A parasite of a corrupt society they say, and set down his work as trivial.

But one who really knows the work of Watteau discovers in it much more than this. To appreciate him fully it is not only to his paintings that we must turn, but to his drawings, for the weak consumptive handled the crayon with the mastery which renders his slightest

MASTER PAINTERS : WATTEAU

sketch a thing of delight, worthy to compare with the drawings of the greatest draughtsmen of all, Leonardo, Rubens, Rembrandt. His health with him did not cripple his hand, nor dim his eye; rather, it seemed to give him a more searching quality of sight, a more vigorously vital touch. *Ars longa, vita brevis*, was in the highest degree true for him, and in his work we find a feverish concentration as if he felt the time were all too short.

And his "Fêtes galantes," are they but trifling pastorals? No, assuredly those are no earthy "Fêtes,"—that fairy land never belonged even to fair France. The scenes may be the gardens of the Luxembourg, those gay courts and ladies all dressed in the costumes of France, but the atmosphere belongs to another world of fancy. And through it all there runs a strain of music sweet but sad unutterable, the longing for the unattainable.

Camille Mauclair, the French critic, in his beautifully sympathetic study of the master and his work, classes him with such spirits as Keats, Chopin, and Schubert, of a delicacy that is rare to linger long on this earth.

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PAINTER OF *FÊTES GALANTES*

"The *mal de l'infini*," he says "is common to a whole series of minds which form a family apart in the arts. Each one contributes his form, but the scenery has been painted once for all in '*L'embarquement pour Cythère.*'"

CHAPTER TEN

THE ENGLISH PORTRAIT PAINTERS
REYNOLDS AND GAINSBOROUGH



CHAPTER TEN

THE ENGLISH PORTRAIT PAINTERS

REYNOLDS AND GAINSBOROUGH

PAINTING IN ENGLAND IS AN ART which blossomed late. The centuries which saw it rise in Italy and progress through its fascinating stages in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to its maturity in the sixteenth, passed without a response in England. In Germany, as we have seen, an early school rose producing masters of interest and individuality, culminating in the figure of Albert Dürer; the Netherlands too supplied an early religious art, worthy of comparison with the best of any country and numbering the Van Eycks and Memling among its masters. Even Spain and France produced monastic painters who adorned their churches with quaint and devout altarpieces. All these phases of early art were religious in their foundation, but art became more secular in its aims in the sixteenth century, the period of the great decorative artists, and the seventeenth century is marked by the appearance of several great masters, each one isolated in his own country and influencing his own

ENGLISH PORTRAIT PAINTER

school. Rubens, Rembrandt, Velasquez, these are the great names which usher in modern painting.

Modern they are because more than a mere interval of time separates Raphael from Rembrandt, and Titian from Velasquez.

If one enters a gallery of Italian pictures one is conscious of much more than its strange and haunting beauties. It is an incense-laden atmosphere, we do not breathe in it naturally, we have to adjust our ideas before we get into complete sympathy with the artist. And when we pass from such pictures into the presence of canvases by Rembrandt, or Velasquez, it is like stepping into the open air, the appeal is simple and direct. There is no gulf to bridge over—the atmosphere is as modern as that of to-day.

But even the great masters of the seventeenth century provoked no response in England. Not that England was dead to the æsthetic thrill. The awakening of the Renaissance was heard there too and greeted with an outburst of enthusiasm and energy which made the age of Elizabeth one of the most wonderful in our history.

REYNOLDS AND GAINSBOROUGH

history. But the form this took was literary rather than pictorial. English poetry and English drama have never again touched the sublime heights they reached in the days of Elizabeth, but English painting as a distinct school did not exist, and this too in spite of the deliberate efforts to encourage it, and foster its growth.

Henry VIII. induced Holbein to settle in England, and the country is richer by many of his masterpieces, but of pupils he had few and these but feeble imitators.

A hundred years afterwards Charles I. brought over Vandyke from the Netherlands, but he died leaving behind him many masterpieces but few followers. Sir Peter Lely and Sir Godfrey Kneller were the Court painters of a later day.

True, the traditions of the old medieval illuminators had been kept alive by an unbroken chain of miniature painters, one of whom, Samuel Cooper, has been well spoken of as a "Vandyke in little."

But painting as a popular art, appealing to the masses of the English people and loved

ENGLISH PORTRAIT PAINTERS

and understood by them, did not come into being until well into the eighteenth century.

The first English painter to raise his head above mediocrity was William Hogarth, born in London in the year 1697—in a house in Bartholomew Close, “next door to Mr. Dowling the Printer,” as an old record has it. Trained as an engraver on silver, he turned his attention to copperplate engraving, and afterwards set up as a portrait painter.

It is characteristic of the time that Hogarth's fame rested until late years on his satirical powers rather than on his qualities as a painter. In a series of pictures which were engraved by the painter himself, and thus reached a much wider public than his paintings alone would have appealed to, he mercilessly exposed the faults and follies of the society of his day. The original paintings of the most famous of these series, “Marriage à la Mode,” are now in the National Gallery, and a study of them will reveal many beauties and excellences apart from their mere satirical force.

He possessed, as few painters have done since, the instinct for dramatic composition,

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Colonel Gulliver

1860-1910

FRANK TANNER / STUDIO

REYNOLDS AND GAINSBOROUGH

which placed each figure exactly in its proper place, so that not only the figure, but the picture, was alive. As paintings, too, they are brushed in with a decisive touch, and an entire absence of the hesitating feebleness which marked the work of his contemporaries and predecessors.

Of Hogarth's powers as a portrait painter we may judge from several examples in the National Gallery. His own portrait, painted in 1745, and several others. That of his sister Ann is particularly pleasing. It is boldly and simply painted, the pigment being laid on as if he enjoyed it, and the colour is fresh and pleasant,—one may note that it has stood the test of time much better than that of his great successor, Sir Joshua Reynolds.

But among all Hogarth's paintings there is one which stands out distinct from its fellows, "The Shrimp Girl," which we are happy enough to possess in the National Gallery. It is the merest sketch, an impression dashed off at a sitting, but the painter could not have said more in a dozen sittings. Everything essential is seized and expressed with the unerring

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hand of a master, and the whole is endowed with a verve and a vivacity that makes it live on the canvas. There is nothing in English art so spontaneous until we come to Romney's brilliant sketches of Lady Hamilton.

But tardy as the English school was in making its first appearance its development was speedy. Within a generation of Hogarth's group of giants arose, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Romney, Raeburn, Wilson, and McLand carrying it to full maturity, and leaving behind them a wealth of masterpieces, strewing the glory of this country, and settling beyond question the lines on which English art was to develop. This chapter will deal chiefly with the first two of these great painters, Reynolds and Gainsborough, to whom more than all others is due the credit of building firmly the foundations of the British school.

Reynolds was born at Plympton Earl, in Devonshire, on the 6th July 1723. His father, the Head Master of Plympton Grammar School, was at first much distressed at the boy's tastes, and a youthful sketch is still in existence on the back of a Latin exercise with the inscription:

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tien by his father: "This was drawn by Joshua in school out of sheer idleness." However, Nature was too strong for the honest schoolmaster, so he gave way with a good grace, and when his son was seventeen gave him his choice between becoming an apothecary or an artist.

The answer was characteristic. "I will be a painter if you will give me the chance of becoming a good one, not an ordinary one, otherwise I should prefer to sell drugs." For we must remember that in those days there were no photographers, and in every considerable town there were painters of a sort who could turn out a passable likeness.

He was apprenticed accordingly to William Hudson, a London portrait painter, with whom he studied for the space of two years. At the end of that time he returned to Devonshire, where he remained for some three years, executing a number of portraits of the local magnates. Here he was much influenced by the works of a painter, Gandy of Exeter, who worked in a broad simple style and with Rembrandt-like effects of lighting. It was, too, one

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of his maxims that paint should have a golden texture "like cream or cheese," a maxim which Sir Joshua laid to heart, as will be seen from many of his works.

Painted at this time was the interesting portrait of himself now in the National Portrait Gallery, a Rembrandt-like head with the hand shading the eyes and casting a broad shadow on the face. Even at this early stage there is nothing amateur or faltering about the work. It is somewhat cold and colourless, but painted strongly and boldly.

In 1749 he made the acquaintance of Commodore Keppel, a young and rising naval officer, who was shortly after sent to the Mediterranean, and offered to take the painter with him. Reynolds was glad to accept the offer and soon found himself in Rome deep in the study of the old masters. A word here may be of interest as to his methods of study. He copied diligently, trying above all things to grasp the secrets of the gorgeous colouring of the Venetians, and the largeness of conception of the greatest Italian masters. But he was not merely a slavish and unintelligent copyist.

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His brain was busy all the time, studying *how* the old masters got their effects—dissecting their pictures—analysing them.

He used to stand before a picture, and, taking a page of his notebook, rapidly rub in the masses of light and shade, paying no attention to subject or drawing, but getting the masses of light and shade in their proper places and proper relations. He then found the broad principles emerge which underlay the most diverse paintings. Most great artists, he found, spaced out the lights and shadows as follows: a quarter for the highest lights, one half in a medium tone between light and dark, a quarter as dark as possible. Rubens admitted more light than a quarter, Rembrandt hardly an eighth.

It is interesting to note this style of study. It is not the direct study of nature which is the surest guide to most great painters, and only in the hands of a man of Sir Joshua's exquisite taste, and with his skill in selection, in knowing what to take and what to reject, would it be successful.

For three years he stayed in Italy, and when

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he returned to England in 1752 and settled in London it was as a matured and finished painter. He took a house in St. Martin's Lane and at once became the chief fashionable portrait painter of the Metropolis. His life thenceforth is but a record of work done and of steadily growing powers. In 1779, on the foundation of the Royal Academy, he was its first President and received the honour of knighthood.

In the National Gallery we have a wonderful series of the artist's work, showing it in all its phases.

First the child's portraits, of which there are several, the finest being the "Age of Innocence." Few pictures show better the golden quality, and the cheesy, creamy texture of paint which Sir Joshua strove after. The pose, too, is simple and natural. If it lacks the vivacity of Gainsborough's more sprightly maidens, it is full of its own charm.

Among the female portraits none is more distinguished than that of the Countess of Albemarle. The conception is dignified in the extreme yet absolutely natural. The Countess is dressed in a gown of greenish blue and whit-

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brocade with a black silk mantle and hood. The scheme of colour is cool and silvery relieved by the rich crimson of the curtain. The face indeed is rather too pale, a fact which is due to the system which the painter at one time followed. With a view to giving solidity to his flesh painting he was in the habit of laying down a bed of white paint, and painting the features over this with more or less transparent colour. Had the white bedding been allowed to dry hard, a process probably requiring at least a fortnight, this would probably have had no ill effects, but unfortunately in many cases the paint had not properly dried and has absorbed the warm colours painted on it, till the face assumes a pale and ghostlike hue.

But though he painted women with sympathy and seldom failed to impart to his sitters that air of distinction which we have come to regard as the mark of the eighteenth century, Reynolds was at his best as a painter of men, especially when he knew his sitter intimately.

From the number of examples in the National Gallery—two fine portraits of himself, a fine group of two gentlemen, and others—we must

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select one of the most noble of all, that of friend and companion, Dr. Johnson. There are few men we know more of than Dr. Johnson. Boswell has let us into all the secrets of his daily life, and Sir Joshua has placed man himself before our eyes. It was a brilliant circle that revolved round this great centerpiece. Burke the orator, Goldsmith tongue-tied in speech but immortal by his pen, Garrick the first actor of his time, and among them Reynolds as the first painter of his day held the honoured place, while stage-managing and cording the whole was Boswell, forward, impudent and indiscreet, but to whose indefatigable efforts we owe the immortal records of those immortal meetings.

We are told that Dr. Johnson on his deathbed sent for the painter and asked his old friend to grant him three requests. The first was that he would never paint on Sunday. The second, that he would read the Bible as much as possible and always on Sunday. The third, that he would forgive him a debt of £30.

Reynolds readily promised all three, but it is characteristic of his rather unsentimental nature

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that he did not think it necessary to keep the first and second.

One more portrait we must cull from the National Gallery collection. It belongs to the last years of the painter's life and is justly reckoned as one of his masterpieces—the portrait of Lord Heathfield, the Admiral who for three years successfully held the fortress of Gibraltar against the combined forces of France and Spain. We have here a real seaman of the bluff old type, described so well by Robert Louis Stevenson, with a face as weathered and storm-beaten as one of his own figureheads. He is depicted with dramatic fitness with the keys of the fortress in his hand, while behind the guns of Gibraltar thunder defiance.

Here the painter follows a system which he often employs. Not content with depicting the features of his sitter, he searches for means by which he can suggest his character and his occupation. Another famous example of this is the "Mrs. Siddons" of the Dulwich Gallery, who is represented as the Tragic Muse. Here the attitude is borrowed from one of the Sybils

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of Michael Angelo, but so well has the painter used it that the theft is amply justified. It is a grand conception and eminently fitted to the figure he depicts—that of the first tragic actress of the day.

But to my mind this excessive thought is almost a weakness in Sir Joshua. In his happiest instances and where he is in thorough sympathy with his subject it clinches the matter and drives the truth home emphatically. But where sympathy and insight are lacking it saves ours too much of the label.

But it is not in the National Gallery that we find what, in the opinion of many, is Sir Joshua's masterpiece. I refer to the "Nelly O'Brien," which hangs in the Wallace Collection. The fault of too many of his female portraits is that, beautiful as they are, they are too lofty and cold. It is as though the artist had kept aloof from his subject and looked at her coldly from the outside. But here it was different. Nelly O'Brien was an actress of whom he did not need to stand in awe, the winsome face is painted sweetly and with sympathy, and surely no painter could have wished for a more

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charming model. Though painted at a comparatively early date, 1763, when the painter was forty years of age, in technique he has never surpassed the work in this picture. The arrangement is simplicity itself, but how beautifully managed is the lighting. The warm light skirting the brim of the straw hat and gilding one edge of the cheek while one or two gleams fall on the throat and breast. The shadowed face is full of subdued reflected light.

In colour we have here a harmony exquisite in its refinement. Delicate blue on hat and underbrim, this tint is repeated in a clearer note in the stripes of the blue and white skirt turned back over the pink quilted petticoat. The painting of this quilted petticoat rivals the treatment of a similar texture in Titian's "Ariosto." This mass of delicate carnation is veiled by filmy muslin, black lace bodice through which striped sleeves show. The dog in her arms is merely a mass to relieve the black. But beautiful as is the colour it is the face which holds our attention.

But it is time now to turn to Sir Joshua's great rival, Thomas Gainsborough. He was born

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at Sudbury in Suffolk in 1727, the same district that fifty years later produced Constable. Little is known about his early life except that he was passionately fond of drawing and begged countless holidays from his father, which he employed in sketching every tree and stile in the neighbourhood of Sudbury. Indeed it is said that when the requisite note from his father to the schoolmaster was not forthcoming he made no scruples about forgoing it.

At the age of fourteen he was sent to London where he studied under Francis Hayman, but after four years he returned to Ipswich, where at the age of nineteen he married Margaret Burr, a lady of some private means.

Here for some ten or twelve years he resided painting what portraits came his way. These early years were fruitful in another way, for they enabled the painter to give that minute and faithful study to landscape painting which afterwards made him one of the finest landscape painters of the English school.

One of these early landscapes, painted probably before the year 1750, is the view

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Dedham, in the National Gallery. Based on the work of the Dutch landscapists, it is formal and precise. The trees are painted branch by branch, almost leaf by leaf, but the feeling of the landscape is pure English. It is just such a typical smiling English landscape as we may see to-day.

Belonging also to the early period before he left Ipswich is the charming canvas of his two daughters. It is difficult to imagine anything more different from the stately Gainsborough of later years. It is little more than a sketch, the heads and hands only being carefully painted, while the costumes are brushed in broadly and simply, patches of bare canvas being left, and the feet are merely indicated ; but the effect is pleasing and natural in the extreme, the pose charming in its unaffected grace.

How long Gainsborough would have been content to stay in Ipswich is doubtful, for he was of an indolent nature except when subjected to outside stimulus, but in 1760 his friend and patron, Sir Phillip Thicknesse, prevailed upon him to leave Ipswich for Bath, much to

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the dismay of his wife, who saw ruin in the change of their £6 house for a rental of £5 in Bath.

But once installed at Bath success came him immediately. The town was then at the height of its fame, streets of fine grey stone were rising, and noblemen's seats studded the country round. Gainsborough soon had as many sitters as he cared for, and in the noblemen's collections near he saw works of art which largely affected his own style. By the Vandykes of Wilton House especially he was greatly influenced, and now an air of distinction steals into his portraits that was lacking before. For fourteen years he stayed in Bath and several of his best works date from that period. The "Miss Linley and her brother" until recently at Knole, was painted then, and in the opinion of Sir Walter Armstrong no less a painting than the "Blue Boy," justly esteemed as one of Gainsborough's masterpiece. Vandyke himself painted nothing more distinguished than this. To the Bath period also attributed the "Watering Place" in the National Gallery.

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In 1774 Gainsborough removed to London, where, until the time of his death, he shared the honours and patronage of the city with Romney and Reynolds. He was an original member of the Royal Academy and exhibited there until 1783, when, after a disagreement as to the hanging of one of his pictures, he ceased to exhibit. He was, in the opinion of the other members, not an entirely satisfactory member of the Academy, as he took no part in their affairs except to exhibit annually from six or eight pictures. But after all, what greater service could he have rendered them?

Gainsborough, like Reynolds, is well represented in all his phases in the National Gallery. Among early examples we have the "Dedham Vale" and the portraits of his two daughters already referred to. Another early landscape is the view of Cornard in Suffolk, finished with all the elaborate care of a pre-Raphaelite. How his landscape work grew in breadth and freedom may be seen in the noble example, the "Market Cart." It is still Nature, but not rendered in the old slavish way. It is Nature seen through the tempera-

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ment of the painter. The lighting is dramatic—the gloom of the trees, the sunlight striking in on the cart with its busy figures. The lines of the composition are grand and swelling; the colour rich and golden. Here we have an English landscape painter who was bigger than his subjects and dominated them, making them reflect his own personality.

We see the painter in another mood in the amazingly lifelike study of his two dogs. Few though his animal studies are, Morland is the only one of his contemporaries who is here his equal, and he is only surpassed by Velasquez.

On one wall the large picture of "Musidora" occupies a prominent place. It is one of the few examples where we find Gainsborough painting the nude, but this semi-classical style does not suit him. The picture has fine colour. The upper part of the figure is well modelled, but the design is not happy, especially in the lower part. The painter seems to have felt this, for the right leg below the knee has been altered in position.

But on each side of this comparatively uninteresting centre there hangs a masterpiece.

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THE DOLCE MARCHE

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On the left is the portrait of Edward Orpin, the Parish Clerk of Bradford, Wiltshire, quiet and refined in its treatment. A wonderful study of serene old age. On the other side hangs the great portrait of Mrs. Siddons. This veritable *tour de force*, painted in 1784, the year after Reynolds painted her as the "Tragic Muse," is one of Gainsborough's most brilliant, though not one of his most subtle, paintings. It represents the actress rather than the woman. Indeed one might say that it represents the costume rather than the actress, so little does any human quality enter into the picture. But in its way it is wonderful. The black head-dress with its great plumes, the powdered hair, the pencilled eyebrows, the band of black velvet on the neck, the warm tint of the throat showing through the filmy white muslin, the brilliant blue scarf and the duller blue stripes on the silken dress, the orange mantle, the muff, the red chair and curtain—it is an astonishing colour harmony rich as a Rubens or a Titian, but cool as a Velasquez. The picture is said to have been painted as an answer and a contradiction to the principles laid down in Sir

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Joshua Reynolds' eighth discourse, where he said that the lights of a picture must necessarily be warm yellows or reds, never blue, grey or green.

Of a quieter and more subtle nature is his little study of his daughter at the age of about twenty years. Not an interesting face, absolutely plain, yet painted in such a way as to linger in the memory more than the painted faces of any beauty.

Gainsborough is not represented in the Wallace Collection so fully as Sir Joshua so far as numbers go. There are only two examples there, but they are of his very best.

First we have the great portrait of Mrs. Robinson. Like Sir Joshua's state portraits it represents a fine lady and a beauty, but how much more. Feminine beauty appealed to Gainsborough in a way that it has done to no other artist. He invests his sitters with an ethereal glamour which makes them something more than common clay, doubtless a little lower than the angels, for they are still delicately human, but with everything that is not beautiful refined away till the portrait stands, still individual

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personal, and expressing the essence of all that was charming in the sitter.

Technically the painting is marvellous. No one but Gainsborough could cover a canvas with paint so that each brush stroke glows with inward light and the whole sparkles with the fire of an opal.

It is interesting to note the peculiar technique which characterises a typical Gainsborough. The colour seems to be laid on in little radiating strokes as if applied with a crayon, giving a beautifully sparkling and vibrant effect. It is noticeable also in this portrait how differently the dog is treated from that in the "Nelly O'Brien" which hangs on the same wall. Reynolds painted the dog as a mere blot of white to be relieved against the dark dress, and artistically it fulfils perfectly the purpose for which it was introduced, but as an animal it does not exist.

When Gainsborough comes to paint the dog, however, he cannot help being interested, and so the animal becomes no less alive than the lady. This was doubtless an indiscretion. It might have spoilt the picture, but the lady's

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face is so fascinating that it holds you without difficulty.

If there is a flaw in the picture it is in the somewhat weak drawing of the knee, as if the painter had got tired and had slurred over that part of the work.

The other Gainsborough in the Wallace Collection is the portrait of "Miss Haverfield"—the child dressed up in such a quaint old-fashioned way, but still a child.

One has only to compare it with the "Strawberry Girl," hanging on the same wall, to see the difference between Reynolds' treatment of children and Gainsborough's. Reynolds was interested in children and observed them carefully from the outside. Gainsborough understood them. Compare the sparkle and animation in the face of Miss Haverfield with the rounded stolidity of the Strawberry Girl, the Infant Samuel, or the child in the Age of Innocence. If actually endowed with life the last three would sit still till the crack of doom, but little Miss Haverfield would be out of her frame and up to mischief in the twinkling of an eye.

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It is interesting to compare the two great men, for by general consent they are placed above all their contemporaries as the leaders and indeed the founders of the English school. But when one comes to analyse works of art one finds that after all what makes pictures great is not drawing, not composition, not colour, not light and shade. These are all merely different forms of harmony, but no amount of harmony will make a tune. That must come from the individuality of the artist himself. They only represent the words by means of which the thought of the artist is expressed. The real key to a man's work is his character.

Take Sir Joshua. A self-contained, self-centred man, but of exquisite taste. His whole life is a steady progression. He chose the career of a painter and set to work to make himself as good a one as he could. He went to Italy, studied the great masters there, and sought to incorporate their excellences in his own work.

There was little that was spontaneous in him, but no one knew better how to select. In the words of Sir Walter Armstrong : "He fed art with thought." His interests were almost en-

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tirely intellectual, and among the most brilliant men of his day he moved as an equal. His emotions seemed always under control, but cold as even selfish as he was, his judicial mind kept his conduct on a higher level than his instincts would have done. He never married. He seemed to be passionately attached to no one, but he never quarrelled. And this is the more wonderful from the numbers of averse people he mixed with. His studio was a neutral ground where all sorts of opposing parties met. The notorious Wilkes would succeed an eminent nobleman, an archbishop would occupy the painting chair just vacated by an actress. This character made him an ideal President of the Royal Academy.

A man of a different type was Gainsborough, all fire and impetuosity. Sir Joshua's great fault was that he never took fire. Gainsborough, on the other hand, had no capacity for the severe and prolonged study to which Reynolds applied himself. His style of painting was a series of brilliant improvisations. It is related that with a lady sitter he sat talking in his vivacious and sparkling way until she

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became interested and animated. Then suddenly something in her pose and expression would strike him. "Stay as you are," he would say, and seizing his brushes set rapidly to work. Anything more different from Sir Joshua's solid and conscientious methods it would be difficult to imagine. In temperament the one was the antithesis of the other. Gainsborough, generous to a fault, but rash and impetuous in speech. While Sir Joshua quarrelled with no one, Gainsborough, touchy and sensitive, was always ready to pick a quarrel. It is related that once he overheard a nobleman at his door ask his servant "if that fellow had completed his portrait yet." When his Lordship was shown into the studio, Gainsborough, after displaying the finished portrait, drew a wet brush over the features, smearing them out, and remarked to his astonished patron, "Where is the fellow now?" Sir Joshua, if he had heard the remark at the door, would merely have turned his deaf ear to it.

The two men came together in London, as was inevitable, but as might be expected were never close friends. Sir Joshua's jealous nature did not like a rival, disguise the fact as he might.



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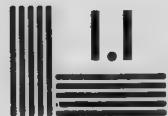
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Gainsborough in his generous way had often friendly impulses. On one occasion he offered to paint Sir Joshua's portrait, but the first sitting was the last. On his deathbed, however, he sent for Sir Joshua, and the two great rivals parted friends.

In his work Sir Joshua is never trivial though he is often dull, but at his best he attains a magnificent breadth and solidity. Gainsborough is often trivial, even vapid where his sitter does not interest him, but he has flashes of positive inspiration when the picture seems breathing magically on the canvas, glowing with light and colour. And while Sir Joshua as a rule achieves his greatest successes with his portraits of men, Gainsborough is at his best in his portrayals of women. Reynolds in the main was an intellectual type; Gainsborough lived on his emotions. While Sir Joshua was a member of the most brilliant intellectual group of his day, Gainsborough was quite content with the Bohemian society of a few musicians and friends.

Sir Joshua's art may be likened to a pyramid built on far-spreading foundations, a monumen-

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plain, noble, and imposing. Gainsborough's is a flimsier structure shooting upwards like a spire, greatly daring and reaching to loftier altitudes and a finer and a purer air.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
TURNER AND THE ENGLISH
LANDSCAPISTS

CHAPTER ELEVEN TURNER & THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPISTS

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS OF ENGLISH painting is in the main the story of the great masters of portraiture : with the coming of the new century art enters on a new phase, so that just as the characteristic feature of the eighteenth century was portraiture, so we shall find the rise and development of a national school of landscape painting the leading feature of the first half of the nineteenth century.

English taste seemed to turn naturally to landscape painting ; the love of home, and of the out-of-door life, the delight in familiar scenes —all these were ministered to at a time when, despite the drains of war, the country was increasing rapidly in material wealth and prosperity. To England, indeed, is due the development of one particular branch of landscape art, that of the water-colourist, a bypath of art not pretending to grandeur or magnificence, but full of scenes of homely beauty, rendered with exquisite freshness and charm.

So, like the little masters of Germany, the English water-colourists form a school within a

MASTER PAINTERS : TURNER

school, whose modest place in the fabric of no genuine student of art can afford to ignore.

English landscape art indeed had begun in the eighteenth century with Richard Wilson; alas, he was born in advance of his time. A member of the Royal Academy, he was glad to accept the post of librarian there, so little mungerative was his work. Small wonder, coming into a modest competence he shooed the dust of London from his feet, to die soured and neglected in a little village of North Wales.

But Wilson's mellow landscapes, so graceful in their quiet dignity, were based on the style of Claude, and though, through their Italian and classic dress, we see the features of English landscape struggling into light, yet we understand that his work made little direct appeal to the public.

A more truly English style is found in the work of Gainsborough, the real herald of the English landscape school. A landscape painter by nature, and a portrait painter by necessity, he has been called, and had he been born ten years later, landscape painting would probably have been the chief work of his life. As it

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it could be little more than his hobby, indulged in chiefly during his early years, and pushed aside continually by the more serious claims of portraiture, for there seemed little demand for landscape among the art patrons of his day.

John Crome, "Old Crome" as he was familiarly called, the founder of the Norwich school, who painted England with the simple-hearted fidelity of the old Dutchmen, but in a broad massive style as English as the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds, carried on the tradition and prepared the way for Constable; but he was fain to depend for his livelihood on teaching, for the popularising of landscape came only with the early years of the new century and the rise of the water-colourists.

Just as the great portrait painters had owed their existence to the fact that their patrons desired to pass on to posterity a record of their features, so the landscape school crept into existence under the guise of topographers.

There was a ready sale for books on the natural features and famous buildings of the country, illustrated by engravings, in which, as

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a tribute to personal vanity, the country seats of wealthy gentlemen were inserted for an adequate fee. These engravings required preliminary drawings, and many of the earlier water-colour painters found in such undertakings a means of travel and the opportunities for study of nature. Indeed, to some extent, the technique of the water-colourist was founded on these topographical drawings, executed in wash for the convenience of the engraver, and at first only slightly tinted with colour. Often in the actual engravings the tints were added afterwards by hand.

Then, again, when a great nobleman in those days made the "grand tour," he did not carry a camera, and there were no photographs of the scenes and objects of interest to be had at every stopping-place. And so to bring home souvenirs of his tour, it was necessary for him to take an artist in his train. It was in such a capacity that Cozens, sometimes called the father of English water-colour, travelled on the Continent.

In the year 1775 two artists were born in London who were destined to be the real founders of the new school, the one was Thomas Girtin,

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the son of a Southwark ropemaker, the other Joseph Mallard William Turner, the son of a barber in Maiden Lane. For twenty-six years their careers ran side by side, in mutual emulation ; then Girtin, the leader and the more dominating spirit, died prematurely, while his rival lived fifty years longer, to make himself the greatest of English landscapists.

Little is known of Turner's early life. His father seems to have been a garrulous little man, who early discovered a market value in his son's drawings, and used to put them in the shop window to sell for a shilling or two. It was soon decided that the boy was to be a painter, and in due course he was apprenticed to an engraver, Thomas Malton.

Girtin, on his part, was apprenticed to Edward Dayes, another engraver, a rough and tyrannical sort of man. For some reason he and his pupil did not get on well. Girtin felt that he was not getting proper tuition, and objected to the routine of laying tints on engravings all day, and being of a high-spirited and imperious disposition refused point-blank to do so. The master insisted, and the quarrel terminated by

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the refractory apprentice finding himself com-
ped in jail.

The sequel reads like a piece of fiction. Mr. Essex, a well-known art patron, happened to be visiting the Fleet, and was told of the young artist confined there. Going into his room, he found the walls covered with sketches, and was so taken with the lad's ability, and probably also with his frank and manly bearing, that he sought out Dayes, paid up the sum required for the cancelling of the apprenticeship, and throughout his life remained one of Girtin's chief friends and patrons.

A little later Girtin and Turner came together under the same master, John Raphael Smith, the mezzotint engraver.

They often met in the evenings at an Academy of a less formal kind, which formed one of the most important features in the training of many of the young artists of the day. A Dr. Monro, consulting physician to Bridewell and Bethlem hospitals, was one of the leading amateurs of the city. A man of the most cultured taste and of wide sympathies, he possessed a valuable collection of paintings, including examples

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by such masters as Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Morland, Canaletto, Claude, and Wilson. He was glad to encourage young artists to come and copy these works, and in the winter evenings a sort of informal school was held. The room was set out with little double desks at which two could sit face to face, a single candle between them, and copy the various works supplied them.

The honest doctor kept the drawings, giving each a good supper, and half-a-crown for his evening's work. It would be difficult to imagine a more helpful or kindly arrangement for the struggling student.

Turner and Girtin tramped into the country together too, sketching diligently all that came their way. In the Whitworth Gallery at Manchester you may still see the same subject, a view of the Church at Henley-on-Thames, sketched by each from almost the same point of view.

But they differed greatly in character. Girtin was of a frank, generous nature, vivacious and fond of company, the type of the happy-go-lucky artist, making friends wherever he went.

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Turner, on the other hand, was close, taciturn and inscrutable. His early home-life seems to have soured and narrowed him. From his father he inherited the paltry creed of the small tradesman, that grudged every benefit to another as something denied to himself. "If Tom Girtin had lived," he remarked in after life, "I should have starved." His mother was subject to fits of insanity, and probably his temperament also was to some extent inherited by her son. Brusque and uncouth in manner of little culture outside his art, he was most at home in the lower grades of society. As time went on his art life, with its congenial friends and patrons, and his private life with his own associates, drew farther and farther apart.

It was in 1792 that Turner started from Bristol with a borrowed pony, on the first of his sketching tours, and in the ten years that followed he and Girtin must have seen the greater part of England with a thoroughness which even now with all the facilities at our disposal, few of us can pretend to.

It was an unspoiled England that they discovered a hundred years ago—the England of

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Washington Irving, when the country was still an agricultural country. A rural England, the squire still the little king of each village, taking a patriarchal interest in the acres under his sway. The manufacturing towns had not risen then—the villages, but for the mellowing of age, stood as they had been built some two hundred years before, and the churches had not yet come under the hand of the restorer.

In those days it was Girtin who was the pioneer and the leader. It was his firm and decisive technique of broad and simple washes that laid the foundation on which the water-colour school was carried. Turner, more hesitating and more experimental, ultimately carried this technique much farther, but never surpassed the marvellous sureness of hand and delicacy of touch which, by the simplest of means, enabled Girtin to achieve the most astonishing results. In the British Museum there is a study of a waterfall by Girtin, delicate as lace work, painted simply and directly, the white paper being left for the high lights, without picking out or erasure.

But as it was with Giorgione and Titian, so it

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was with Girtin and Turner. The former used up too soon his youthful energies ; his early maturity was a forced and hothouse growth. Nature exacted her toll in his premature decay and early death. Turner, developing more slowly, and endowed with a greater reserve of physical strength, was destined to build on the foundations laid by the other, and erect there a noble structure during his long and arduous life.

Some affection of the heart, probably aggravated by exposure, seems to have been the malady that carried off the young painter. In 1801 he felt his health failing. A journey to France was undertaken without beneficial results, and he died in the following year, working busily till within a week of his death.

Turner was now left alone, the undisputed leader of the new school. His success had been speedy. One of the first pictures he exhibited at the Royal Academy was a view of "Norham Castle," in 1798. Passing the spot with Cadell the publisher in 1818, he took off his hat to the old ruin, which, he said, had made his fortune twenty years before. In the next year he wa-

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elected an Associate of the Academy and a full member in 1802.

By this time he had travelled well-nigh all over England. In 1789 he was sketching with Girtin on the Thames, in 1790 at Eltham and Uxbridge; 1791, at Malmesby; 1792, Bristol and Wales; 1792-5, Yorkshire, the Lakes, the Borders, and Scotland; 1798, Wales again; 1799, Wiltshire; 1801, Scotland again.

He was now comparatively well off, and had purchased the house at 64 Harley Street which he retained till the end of his life, afterwards acquiring and connecting with it the adjoining house and that in Queen Anne Street, round the corner.

Strangely enough, although within the year or two following Girtin's death, Turner's mastery over water-colour as a medium reached its height, yet he gradually ceased to exhibit water-colour drawings, and by the year 1807 was represented in the Academy only by oils. From 1804 until the end of his life he exhibited only fifteen water-colours in London. But all his life it was his favourite medium and he understood it as he never did oil, and sketched perpetually

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in it. Perhaps he did not think the results sufficiently important to give him the position he desired, and besides, he wished to compete with old masters of landscape on their own ground.

This curious form of emulation was characteristic of his strange mind. One after the other he challenged Claude, Cuyp, Willem van de Velde, even such lesser men as Nasmyth, producing works in their distinctive styles, in which he endeavoured, usually with success, to outdo his model.

The most striking example of all was the production of his *Liber Studiorum*. Claude, towards the end of his life, had made a series of monochrome drawings after his pictures, which he termed the *Liber Veritas*, intending it as a complete pictorial record of his life's work. The volume was in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire, and had been reproduced in a series of engravings by Richard Earlom. In spite of the fact that these drawings were originally made merely as memoranda and not as works of art, nothing would satisfy Turner that he should produce a similar, but infinitely superior, volume of landscape studies in monochrome.

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chrome. Such was the absurd origin of the *Liber Studiorum*, a series of seventy-one plates, partly etched, partly in mezzotint, which show us the work of the artist at his best, and though without the glory of his marvellous colour, have as a compensation, nothing to fear from the hand of time.

The history of its production from 1807 to 1819—his close supervision of every part of the process, most of the outlines being etched by his own hand, his troubles with the engravers, and his quarrels with the publishers over the division of the profits—forms an interesting episode in the story of his life.

A curious story is told by Frith in his autobiography, of how the picture dealer Halstead once, obtaining a fine but badly damaged print of the *Liber* series, put it in his window, exposed to the sun and dust. Turner was passing by, bounced into the shop, and opened out on the unsuspecting dealer.

"It is a confounded shame to treat an engraving like that! What can you be thinking about to go and destroy a good thing?—for it is a good thing, mind you!"

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"I destroy it!" said the shopman in a
"What do you mean by saying I destr
it? and who the devil are you, I should
to know? I didn't ask you to buy it, d
You don't look as if you could understa
good print when you saw one."

"Why, I did it!" said Turner.

"Did what? Did you spoil it? If you
you deserve—"

"No, no, man! My name's Turner, and
the drawing, and engraved the plate from

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the prints
"Is it possible that you are the great Tur
Well, sir, I have long desired to see you,
now that I have seen you, I hope I shall n
see you again, for a more disagreeable pe
I have seldom met."

Sir Walter Armstrong in quoting the s
adds :—

"Turner flounced out of the shop, but a
minutes later the door opened again, and
head was thrust in through the opening : “
bless you, Halstead!” he cried, and then a
disappeared.

In 1808 he was appointed Professor of

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spective to the Academy, a position which appears to have particularly tickled his vanity. It was ludicrous, if a little pathetic, to see the greatest living master of landscape adding the initials P. P. after his signature, and having the title painted in full in the Royal Academy catalogue.

This period, the first quarter of the nineteenth century, was probably the happiest part of the painter's life. His powers had come to their full maturity, he was the unquestioned leader of the English school, and he had made a number of close friends ; men who had been able to get below the crust of eccentricity and churlishness under which he concealed a most sensitive nature. How reticent he could be may be judged from the fact that an Irish doctor, Robert J. Graves, struck up an acquaintance with him in Italy, and travelled with him for several months without knowing his name, which only transpired on their reaching Rome, where he was known.

Chief of these old friends was Walter Fawkes, of Farnley, Yorkshire, to whose beautiful country seat in Wharfe Dale, near Harrogate,

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Turner paid almost yearly visits, often exceeding to months. When Fawkes died in 1839 it was a terrible loss to Turner, and never towards the end of his life, despite the pressing invitation of the family, could he bring himself to return to Farnley again.

As years went by others of his old friends passed away and he grew more and more solitary in his habits. His private life became more terranean and secretive, and he only emerged into public view at the Royal Academy exhibitions and such functions.

But his industry never flagged. His water-colour studies and sketches, though unexecuted, were accumulating by hundreds, and to the last twenty-five years of his life belong most of his masterpieces in which he raised his art to epic grandeur, such canvases as those in the National Gallery, "Ulysses deriding Polyphemus," "The Fighting Temeraire," and "The Burial of Wilkie."

The second of these, painted in 1838-9, is a work by which he is most widely known. In the words of Sir Walter Armstrong, it "has combined three different sorts of appeal,

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a work of art it gratifies the artist, as a page of history it excites the lover of his country, as a reproduction of external beauty it delights the eye seeking to renew the pleasures of contemplating nature."

The "Fighting Temeraire," as the sailors called her, had a stirring career. Built for the French navy, she was one of Nelson's prizes at the Battle of the Nile. She was the second ship in the line at the Battle of Trafalgar, following close on the stern of the *Victory*, and when the latter was laid alongside the *Redoutable*, the *Temeraire* drew up on the other side of the French ship. Another vessel, the *Fougueux*, was ranged alongside the *Temeraire*, and the four lay locked together in mortal conflict, the guns of the *Victory* being repressed to prevent the shot going right through to the *Temeraire*. During the battle the *Redoutable* surrendered to the *Victory* and the *Fougueux* to the *Temeraire*.

In 1838 she was sold out of the service and towed to Rotherhithe to be broken up. As luck would have it Turner and the water-colourist Clarkson Stanfield were in a boat on the

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Thames as the vessel passed. "There is a fine subject," said Stanfield, and eight months later Turner's picture appeared at the Academy. Its message has been rendered in stirring verse by Henry Newbolt, which will go down to posterity linked with the picture.

"Now the sunset breezes shiver,
Temeraire, Temeraire.
And she's fading down the river,
Temeraire, Temeraire.
Now the sunset breezes shiver
And she's fading down the river,
But in England's song for ever
She's the fighting Temeraire."

About 1844 the artist's powers began to fail. His eyesight was affected. His colour sense seemed confused. His eccentricities became more pronounced, he disappeared from sight, even his friends did not know where he was living.

He was last seen in public at the Royal Academy on Varnishing Day 1851, and his fellow-academicians remarked how ill he looked. When his friend and executor Harpur found him out on December 18th, living in a little house at Chelsea under an assumed name, t

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sands had almost run out. He died next day, the 19th December 1851, at the age of seventy-six. Though regarded in his lifetime as misanthropic and miserly, yet in his will he left his entire fortune, £140,000, to be devoted to philanthropic purposes.

Unfortunately, so confused and incoherent was the document, that although the general intentions of the testator were obvious to any one, the next-of-kin, the people whom he had ignored completely in the will, were able successfully to contest it.

Its main provisions were :—First, a few dependents were provided for by annuities. Secondly, the bulk of his fortune was to be devoted to the formation of an institution for the maintenance of unfortunate artists. Third, his works, to be preserved as a collection, were left to the Nation.

Alas, after prolonged litigation the Court issued an order superseding the will and disposing of the effects as follows :—

The National Gallery received all the works by his own hand. The annuitants the provisions laid down in the will. The heir-at-law

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the real estate, and the next-of-kin all the
of the property, including plates, engravings
and copyrights.

The scheme for the provision of a home
unfortunate artists, on which Turner had
his heart, was abandoned entirely.

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CHRIST WASHING PETER'S FEET

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CHAPTER TWELVE
ROSSETTI AND THE PRE-
RAPHAELITES

CHAPTER TWELVE D. G. ROSSETTI, AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

DURING THE MIDDLE OF THE NINETEENTH century the most interesting figure in English art is that of Rossetti, whose name is inseparably connected with its two chief movements, the brilliant revolt of the Pre-Raphaelites, and a few years later the Gothic revival, which led to such happy results in the field of arts and crafts.

Curiously enough in neither of these movements was he the originator, but his enthusiasm was so intense and so infectious, his personality so dominating, that once his adherence was secured he inevitably took the lead.

In both cases, too, his interest soon flagged, and he left it to others to work out to the full the logical results, while he pursued what became more and more as years went on his own lonely way.

Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti was born in London on the 12th of May 1828. His father, Gabriel Rossetti, was an Italian refugee, a man of culture and refinement. At one time he had been the librettist at the operatic theatre

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of San Carlo, Naples, and also curator of Naples Museum. When Ferdinand I., the help of the Austrians, suppressed constitutional government in 1821, Gabriel Rossini, a noted and outspoken Liberal, escaped from Malta on a British man-of-war, disguised in a British uniform. In 1824 he settled in England, and in 1826 married Frances Mary Lavinia Polidori, the daughter of an Italian who had married an English wife. On both sides then the future painter and poet inherited Italian blood.

There were four children of the marriage: Maria Francesca born in 1827, Gabriel Charles in 1828, Dante in 1829, William Michael in 1829, Christina in 1830.

Their house in Charlotte Street was a rendezvous for all Italian patriots, and the young Rossettis were brought up in an atmosphere of art, literature, and never-ending political discussion. To politics, perhaps on this account, Rossetti early conceived a violent dislike, which he retained to the end of his life.

His father was an ardent admirer of Da Vinci, and published several volumes of comment

TI, AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

on the poet's work, reading into it strange and esoteric meanings, especially of an anti-papal tendency. This attitude of mind rather repelled the children from the writings of Dante, as a subject suited only for abstruse study, but soon Rossetti rediscovered for himself the great poet whose personality was to exercise so marked an influence on his own.

The first sign of this was the alteration he made in his name, transposing the names Dante and Gabriel, and dropping out the Charles altogether—so that from the days of his youth he has been known as Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

From his earliest years it was an understood thing in the family that he was to be a painter. His brothers and sisters were all talented, the two youngest sharing with him, Christina in a marked degree, his poetic and literary gifts, but painting always seems, with the exception perhaps of a brief period about 1851 and 1852, to have been considered by him his serious work in life.

In boyhood he attended King's College school, and there was taught drawing by one of the finest landscape masters of the English school,

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John Sell Cotman, by the irony of fate condemned to the drudgery of a drawing-master but strangely enough there is no sign of influence in Rossetti's work, nor any mention of him in any of his biographies. After a period with the pure landscape art of Cotman Rossetti has nothing in common, though doubtless he learned something from him in the manipulation of water-colour, a medium to which in his earlier work especially he was very partial.

He first studied art seriously—or at least what was supposed to—at Sass's Academy in Bloomsbury Street, under F. S. Cary, but his attendance was irregular and his attention fleeting. It is said that though there was a skeleton in the classroom to draw from, Rossetti left the school after several years ignorant of the fact that the human leg had more than one bone.

In 1846, at the age of eighteen he entered the Antique School of the Royal Academy, but here too his attendance was desultory. He never passed into the Life School, never studied anatomy, or perspective, and never at any period did he submit himself to the severest course of study which is the only sure foundation for a painter.

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tion of technical mastery. Like many another he was cursed with a fatal facility, he drew with an instinctive delicacy and grace ; his fancy ever teamed with images--perhaps he felt their very charm lay in their illusiveness ; anyhow, he shirked the effort of setting himself deliberately to study technical problems. He was a poet at heart, not a painter. During the years he pretended to study at the Royal Academy, though still a youth under twenty, he wrote the first draft of the "Blessed Damozel," one of the most exquisite poems in the English language, as well as several others little less famous or less beautiful. His mind was full of pictures and they turned naturally to words, but in painting he was all too impatient of the slowness of the means whereby alone he could give them form.

The nineteenth century had now run nearly half its course and English art was at a low ebb. The glories of the old English landscape school were fading away, in figure painting a weight of classicism and formalism smothered all originality.

But in 1848 Rossetti discovered a new man,

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Ford Maddox Brown, a rebel, full of sturdy virility, striking out a course for himself in strong original work. He had entered for the Westminster Hall competition, sending in a number of remarkable designs, none of which were awarded a prize. Seeing the cartoons in Westminster Hall, Rossetti wrote an impulsive letter to the artist, full of the most extravagant praise, and finished up by begging to be received as his pupil.

Maddox Brown more than half thought the letter was a hoax, and never a mild-tempered man, took a good stick in his hand, and called at the house in Charlotte Square.

However, he was soon satisfied that enthusiasm was genuine, and Rossetti was installed as his pupil, being set, to his intense disgust, to paint a still life from a pickle bottle, as first lesson.

At that time among the students of the Royal Academy were two of unusual ability. John Everett Millais, then a lad of nineteen, and William Holman Hunt, two years his senior. Rossetti then was twenty. Revolt was in the air, and the little group of three found common

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ground in their energetic protests against the academic fetters. "Take your inspiration direct from nature," they cried, and everything that was good in the Pre-Raphaelite movement sprang from this principle, which has been the guiding light of every great artistic revival in turn.

The term *Pre-Raphaelitism* was not new. As early as 1810 a band of German artists enrolled themselves under the name, and endeavoured to follow out in every detail the life of the old monastic painters, dressing in monkish garb, living in an imitation monastery, and forswearing the use of models for their figure subjects. This pseudo-mediævalism, as was natural, excited the derision of the art world, and the name was freely bandied about as a term of contempt.

One evening the three friends met in Millais' studio, and, looking over a set of engravings from the early frescoes of the Campo Santo, at Pisa, they discovered in them a freshness and vigour of outlook which seemed to them akin to the new spirit which they wished to introduce into English art. And so, doubtless partly in a

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spirit of bravado, they adopted the opprobrious title, which was soon to hang round their necks like a millstone. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood they dubbed themselves, and the initials P. R. B. were placed on their work. Rossetti's enthusiasm had brought in several supporters, and the little society consisted of six—Holman Hunt, Millais, Rossetti, Wood (a sculptor), F. G. Stephens (afterwards a critic), W. M. Rossetti, who acted as secretary, and James Collinson.

After all, it was only an art students' society like many another such. Its real significance lay in the genius of one of its members, and the outstanding ability of two more. In spite of an unfortunate name, and in spite of the young exaggerations of its members ; for Hunt and Millais, in their zeal, thought that in a hard mechanical copy of nature piecemeal lay the secret of art,—in spite of these errors they gripped a central truth, that nature and man alone must be the foundation of every vital element of art.

The members met weekly, and worked and talked in a spirit of the most intense enthusiasm.

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In 1849 each of the three, for the other members are negligible factors, exhibited a picture signed with the initials P.R.B.

Hunt's and Millais' were hung in the Academy, their subjects being "Rienzi" and "Lorenzo and Isabella" respectively, the latter now in Liverpool, truly a wonderful work for a boy under twenty. Rossetti's picture, "The Girlhood of Mary Virgin," was shown in the Free Exhibition at Hyde Park Corner. The press notices were favourable, and all went well until the next year, when the storm burst on the heads of the devoted three.

Hunt and Millais had again sent to the Academy, Hunt's picture being "A Converted British Family," and Millais', "Christ in the House of His Parents"; and Rossetti's, again in the Free Exhibition, the "Ecce Ancilla Domini," which now hangs in the Tate Gallery.

It is interesting to notice how little the precise and elaborate delineation of natural facts, which forms so large a part of the other two pictures, is to be found in Rossetti's work. Elaboration and precision of detail was always irksome to him, and here the chief interest of the

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picture is psychological, the wonderful study of the emotions of the girl, awaked from her slumbers. In colour certainly its scheme of whites was a direct challenge to the old sombreous school.

The papers, however, made no distinction and attacked all three with extraordinary bitterness.

The *Times* accused them of "affected affectation, senile imitation of a cramped style, bad perspective, crude colours, morbid infatuation, and the sacrifice of beauty, truth, and good feeling to mere eccentricity."

Even Charles Dickens joined the hue and cry in *Household Words*.

It was a tremendous broadside; there certainly had been something a little priggish in the attitude of the youthful reformers, and the angry letters seemed to inflame the critics, as a rag does a bull, but the luckless artists were acutely distressed and saw black ruin stretching them in the face.

But on 13th May a powerful champion appeared. Ruskin, in two letters to the *Times*, entered the lists, warmly taking up their cause.

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defending their pictures generally and in detail, but also, alas, saddling them with a lot of principles which in their youthful innocence they had never dreamt of, and did not know what to do with, but which still pass as the tenets of the P.R.B. For to the public Ruskin was the spokesman of the Pre-Raphaelites, and a band of followers of the new cult sprang up, who with much greater truth might have been termed Ruskinites.

Of the original members, Rossetti had never really practised its methods of careful and accurate representation of detail; Millais soon came to modify them; Holman Hunt alone, to the detriment of his art, continued through a long artistic career to practise them in their original crudity. But the work of the society had been done: its fearless assertion of the necessity for the direct study of nature had struck a mortal blow at academic formalism and sham.

The Brotherhood itself speedily died a natural death. By December 1850 its meetings, weekly at first, had become very irregular. It lingered on for another year or so, but in 1853 the

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final *coup-de-grace* was given by Millais' entry into the fold of the Academy, and Holman Hunt's departure for the Holy Land.

About 1850 Rossetti made the acquaintance of Miss Siddall, a beautiful girl, a milliner's assistant, who had sat to Hunt for his picture "Valentine rescuing Sylvia." A year afterwards they became engaged, and her curious sad and beautiful face, the original of the well-known Rossetti type, now appears and reappears in his work. Among his most delightful productions are the numberless slight pencil sketches—"drawers full of them"—of the head of Miss Siddall.

In 1852 he took a house at 14 Chatham Place, Blackfriars,—the street is now pulled down—with a fine view of the river, and there he lived for nearly ten years.

For a while he was in somewhat impecunious circumstances, but Ruskin once more appeared as a "*deus ex machina*," this time with a generosity and delicacy which cannot be too highly spoken of. He offered to buy at Rossetti's price all his work up to a certain annual sum. It was an arrangement which in the nature

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things could only be temporary, especially in view of the characters of both men, but for the time being it relieved the painter's mind of a weight of care; for Miss Siddall's health, never very robust, now began to give evidence of the consumptive tendency, which made it his continual pre-occupation during the next eight years.

There must have been a strong magnetic charm about this sad-faced young girl, which made her the idol of so brilliant a literary and artistic circle, including Holman Hunt, who painted her as *Sylvia*; Millais, who painted her as *Ophelia*; Maddox Brown, Ruskin, and many others; and who could seize and hold the imagination of so rich and sensuous a nature as Rossetti's.

In 1856 we find him the centre of a new movement, and one which, from his connection with it, has often been confused with the Pre-Raphaelite movement, the Gothic revival, one phase of which, the revival of the arts and crafts of mediæval England, became the life-work of William Morris.

A wave of mediævalism seemed to be pass-

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ing over the land. Sir Walter Scott had begun it. In 1832 Tennyson had published "Lady of Shallot," and was now engaged on the "Idylls of the King." Its effects saturated Rossetti's own poetry, while Ruskin's writings discovered anew to the public the glories of mediæval architecture.

At Oxford was the headquarters of the new enthusiasm, and there Rossetti met two young undergraduates, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris. The first, much in the same way as he had previously done with Maddox Brown, enrolled himself as his pupil. Even the robust and independent Morris fell completely under his influence, for here, as before, the personal magnetism of Rossetti soon dominated the whole group. Both Morris and Burne-Jones had been destined for the Church, now they decided that in art they had found their true vocation, though Morris wrote to his mother: "I will by no means give up things I have thought of for the betterment of the world in so far as lies in me."

In 1856 Morris published the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, in which appeared several of Rossetti's poems, and next year, during the long

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vacation, Rossetti with six other artists organised a scheme to decorate with wall paintings the new Hall of the Union, the subjects being chosen from the Arthurian legend. Alas, none of them had any knowledge of the technique of wall-painting. The bricks were merely white-washed, and the designs painted on this ground in tempera, and now they have completely faded away.

Burne-Jones and Morris were now in London, and in 1861 was formed the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., in which Rossetti was one of the partners, and one of the moving spirits. The management, however, was almost entirely in the hands of Morris, and in 1874 the firm was reconstructed and the business carried on by him alone. It is not too much to say that in a few years English taste was revolutionised by the firm of Morris & Co.

Early in 1860 Rossetti's long-delayed marriage took place, but his wife's health continued delicate, and in May 1861 was still further tried by the birth of a still-born child. She was a martyr to severe neuralgia, for which laudanum was prescribed, and on 10th February 1862 she

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unhappily took an overdose. Rossetti, returning home late from a lecture at the Working Men's College, found her already unconscious and next morning she died.

It was long before he recovered from shock. He took a strange pleasure in drawing a parallel between himself and his great namesake in their mutual loss; and in his famous "Beata Beatrix" he links the two together—the features of Beatrice are those of his wife. In a letter to a friend he explains his composition.

"The picture is not intended at all to represent death, but to render it under the semblance of a trance in which Beatrice, seated at a window overlooking the city, is suddenly rapt from earth to heaven. You will remember how Dante dwells on the desolation of the city, in connection with the incident of her death, and for this reason I have introduced it as my background and made the figures of Dante and Love, passing through the street and gazing ominously on each other, conscious of the event; while a winged messenger of death, drops the poppy between the hands of Beatrice. She, through her

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lids, is conscious of a new world, as expressed in the last words of the 'Vita Nuova'—That blessed Beatrice who now gazeth continually on His countenance *qui est per omnia sœcula benedictus.*"

After his wife's death he could not stay in the house at Blackfriars, so full of sad memories, and removed to 16 Cheyne Walk, where for a time Swinburne, George Meredith, and his brother were with him as joint tenants.

He found distraction for his mind in filling his new home with art treasures of all descriptions. He did not follow the popular taste, but his own, and bought old furniture, bric-à-brac, Chinese and Japanese wares, everything that appealed to him. Indeed, the modern craze for "blue and white" porcelain and Japanese art may with some truth be said to owe its inspiration to him. Though he exhibited little in public, his work was highly appreciated by a number of wealthy connoisseurs, commissions came pouring in, and the decade from 1860 to 1870 is the most prolific part of his artistic career. He made money easily and spent it lavishly.

In 1869, his eyesight threatening to fail, he

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turned to his old love, poetry, and in 1870 published his first volume of original poems,—curious fact, when we remember that the "Bleed Damozel" was written in 1847—and shortly afterwards it was only on the serious monstrance of his father that he set aside poetry and turned to painting as the serious work of his life.

He at once sprang into the first rank of contemporary poets, but in the following year a violent attack was made on him in the *Contemporary Review*, under the heading, "The Fleshy School of Poetry."

Rossetti replied with moderation and dignity, but the incident preyed on his mind. About this time, too, he had begun to be afflicted with insomnia, and probably in ignorance of its baneful influence, took to combating it by the use of chloral. The use of this drug and gradually declining health clouded his later years.

Towards the end of his life, too, he developed a habit of retouching and altering his earlier works, often with unhappy results. In spite of these drawbacks, however, many of his important works, both in poetry and in painting, belong

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to this last period, among them the large canvas "Dante's Dream," now in the Liverpool Art Gallery, which, begun in 1871, was finished in 1881, the year before his death. Rossetti's place in English art is a unique one. Never a master of the first rank, technically considered, indeed surpassed in this respect by many a comparatively mediocre painter, his intense personality made him one of the chief forces of his time.

He created a new type of beauty for himself, surrounded by a strange atmosphere, half-medieval, half-mystic, not a little morbid. He was the first of a school which still has followers to-day, and which numbered Burne-Jones and Aubrey Beardsley among its members.

But though such a potent figure in the art world, he was essentially not a painter but a poet. From the beginning to the end of his career his conception of painting is that it is illustrative, a setting forth of the things of the mind, a rendering visible of dreams. There is little feeling for the beauty of his material in itself, no joyous expression of the worker's delight in his craft, till every stroke vibrates and sings with beauty and life and we gaze on the

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result satisfied, with little desire to probe minds for hidden significances and inner meanings. His technique in itself is a dead thing he never fully mastered his medium, as he the mechanism of words, the true medium the symbolist and the dreamer of dreams. Also his influence on art has been twofold : on intellectual side a stimulant, as potent as it vague ; on the technical side, the evil effects his example lingered for long in the work of his followers.

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